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### Predigtstudie über Joh. 6, 28—40.

(Erster Sonntag nach Epiphania. — Neue Perikopenreihe.)

Jesus hatte den Juden, die ihn am Tage nach der wunderbaren Speisung der Fünftausend nach längerem Suchen in Kapernaum gefunden hatten, vorgehalten, daß sie ihn nicht suchten, weil sie Zeichen gesehen, weil sie in der Speisung und andern Wundern Zeichen erkannt hätten, daß er der von Gott gesandte Messias und Heiland der Welt sei, der der Welt etwas viel Besseres noch als irdische Speise und leibliche Hilfe bringen wolle. Sie kämen nur, weil er ihren Hunger gestillt habe, weil sie irdische Güter, zeitliches Wohlergehen von ihm erwarteten. Er hatte sie gemahnt, nicht um irdische, vergängliche Speise sich abzumühen, sondern vielmehr Speise, die da bleibe ins ewige Leben, zu wirken, zu erarbeiten, solche Speise, wie sie des Menschen Sohn ihnen geben werde, der eben durch solche Wunder, wie sie deren viele gesehen hatten, als Gottes Sohn und Messias vom Vater, von Gott selber, bestätigt und versiegelt sei. Hier setzt unsere Perikope ein.

B. 28: „Da sprachen sie zu ihm: Was sollen wir tun, daß wir Gottes Werke wirken?“ Die Juden überhören ganz, was Jesus von des Menschen Sohn als dem Geber der unvergänglichen Speise gesagt hat; sie überhören ganz die zum Glauben an des Menschen Sohn lockende Stimme des Heilandes. Sie hören nur, daß sie wirken sollen. Demgemäß stellen sie ihre Frage: „Was sollen wir tun, daß wir Gottes Werke wirken?“ Tun, Werke, Wirken, darin geht ihr ganzes religiöses Sinnen und Denken auf. Alles Gute, das sie erhoffen, erwarten sie um ihres Tuns, ihres Werkes, ihres Wirkens willen. Wenn es gilt, Speise, die nie aufhört, die ins ewige Leben bleibt, zu erwerben, sage an, was sollen wir tun? Was sind die Werke, die Gott so gefallen, daß er als Lohn dafür uns unvergängliche Speise darreicht? Das ist so recht der Sinn der Wertgerechten, und Wertgerechtigkeit ist und bleibt ja die Religion eines jeden natürlichen Menschen. „Was soll ich tun?“ so fragte jener Kerkermeister, Apost. 16, 30; der Schriftgelehrte, Luk. 10, 25; Saulus, Apost. 9, 6; die Juden, Apost. 2, 37. Das ist die

Meinung des menschlichen Herzens, daß man etwas tun, wirken, muß, um damit Gottes Schuld und Gunst sich zu erwerben. So ging es unserm Vater Luther. Was wollte der nicht alles tun und wirken und arbeiten, um seiner Seligkeit sicher zu werden, ehe er zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit kam, die Jesus den Juden als Antwort auf ihre Frage einschärft!

„Jesus antwortete und sprach zu ihnen: Das ist Gottes Werk, daß ihr an den glaubet, den er gesandt hat.“ Jesus sagt, Gottes Werk sei, daß sie glauben, *ἡ αἰστένητε*. Das *ἡ* ist natürlich hier nicht final. Der Heiland will keineswegs sagen, daß das das Gott gefällige Werk sei, welches den Glauben zum Zweck und Ziel habe. Er will keineswegs den Leuten vom rechten Verhalten das Wort reden. Der Satz mit *ἡ* gibt häufig den Inhalt des Vorausgehenden an, so zumal nach einem Demonstrativpronomen. So gleich in unserm Kapitel V. 39. 40; Joh. 17, 3 usw. Also: Das ist Gottes Werk, daß ihr glaubet. Man hat diesen Ausdruck Jesu wohl als Beweis für die göttliche Wirkung des Glaubens angeführt, indem man übersetzte: Das ist das Werk, das Gott wirkt. So wahr jedoch der Glaube Gottes Werk und Schöpfung in uns ist, so will doch der Herr das hier nicht sagen. Die Juden hatten gefragt: Was sollen wir tun, daß wir Gottes Werke wirken, Werke, die Gott fordert, die ihm gefallen? Und nichts anderes kann der Ausdruck in der direkten Antwort Jesu auf die Frage der Juden bedeuten. Der Glaube ist nach Jesu Wort das Werk, das Gott fordert, das Gott gefällt. Der Glaube wird öfters in der Schrift ein Werk des Menschen genannt. Der Glaube ist und bleibt eben eine Betätigung des menschlichen Willens, wie ja der Herr gleich in unserm Kapitel den Glauben als ein Kommen (V. 35), als Schauen (V. 40), als Essen und Trinken (V. 50—58) bezeichnet, lauter acta des Menschen. Siehe auch 1 Joh. 3, 23; 1 Thess. 1, 3: *ὑμῶν τὸ ἔργον τῆς πίστεως*. (Vgl. Luther VII, 2213 f. Lehre und Wehre 50, 385 ff.)

Die Juden hatten gefragt nach Werken Gottes. Der Heiland weiß nur von einem Werk, dem Glauben, ohne welchen es unmöglich ist, Gott zu gefallen. Um aber Gott zu gefallen, muß dieser Glaube auch rechter Art sein, den rechten Inhalt haben. Das Objekt des Gott gefälligen Glaubens wird vom Herrn in den Worten angegeben: „daß ihr glaubet an den, den er gesandt hat“. Das ist ein Lieblingsausdruck Jesu für seine eigene Person. *Ἀποστέλλω* oder weit häufiger *πέμπω*; so V. 38. 39. Beide Ausdrücke sind so ziemlich synonym, nur daß vielleicht in *apostello* die Sendung mehr als eine offizielle und autoritative bezeichnet wird. So nennt der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefs Jesum den Apostel unsers Bekenntnisses, Hebr. 3, 1. Jesus, der Gesandte Gottes, das ist ohne Zweifel eine Anspielung an den großen Gesandten des Alten Testaments, den Engel des Herrn, den Engel oder Gesandten des Bundes, Mal. 3, 1, der von Gott gesandt und doch mit Gott gleichen Wesens ist, Jes. 63, 9; 2 Mos. 23, 21. So kommt ja auch Christus in



diesem Zusammenhang des öftern auf seine Gottessohnschaft zu sprechen, da er den Gott, der ihn gesandt hat, Vater (W. 27. 37), meinen Vater (W. 40), nennt. Als solchen von Gott gesandten, mit göttlicher Autorität ausgestatteten, zu Gott in einem eigentümlichen Verhältnis, dem Sohnesverhältnis, stehenden Boten Gottes, der der Welt die ins ewige Leben bleibende Speise geben soll, sollten sie an ihn glauben, vertrauensvoll ihn als solchen anerkennen, zuversichtlich sich an ihn wenden. Das ist das Werk Gottes, wodurch sie Speise wirken würden, die ins ewige Leben bleibt. Welch ein gewaltiger Unterschied zwischen diesem Glauben und dem „Glauben“ der Modernisten!

Freundlich hatte der Heiland die Juden zum Glauben gelockt. Aber so schnell lassen sie sich nicht überzeugen. „Da sprachen sie zu ihm: Was tust du für ein Zeichen, auf daß wir sehen und glauben dir? Was wirkst du?“ Ehe sie ihm Glauben schenken, wollen sie sehen, und damit sie sehen, soll er ein Zeichen tun. Dazu meinen sie volles Recht zu haben. „Du forderst, daß wir wirken sollen; was tust du? (so emphatisch nachgestellt.) Du sagst, du seiest von Gott gesandt; was wirkst du? Reden ist leicht; wo ist der Beweis? Unsere Väter haben doch Manna gegessen, das Moses ihnen vom Himmel gab, und zwar haben sie es während der ganzen Zeit ihrer Wüstenwanderung gegessen. Du hast gewöhnliches Brot gegeben, du hast es bei der einmaligen Speisung bewenden lassen. Nun zeige, daß du wirklich der Messias bist, der aller Not ein Ende macht; dann wollen wir dir glauben.“ Vom Glauben an seine Person keine Silbe. Vgl. Matth. 16, 1.

Was antwortet Jesus diesen Zeichen fordernden Juden? Er geht nicht auf ihre Forderung ein, sondern handelt mit ihnen wie mit dem Zeichen fordernden Königschen, Joh. 4, 50. Er will durch sein Wort sie dahin bringen, daß sie, ohne zu sehen, doch an ihn glauben. Er spricht zu ihnen: „Wahrlich, wahrlich, ich sage euch: Moses hat euch nicht Brot vom Himmel gegeben, sondern mein Vater gibt euch das rechte Brot vom Himmel.“ Jesus will keineswegs leugnen, daß Moses den Vätern Brot vom Himmel gegeben habe. Er ist kein moderner Kritiker, der allerlei Zweifel an den Wundern des Alten Testaments hegt und offen ausspricht. Ihm kann die Schrift nicht gebrochen werden, Joh. 10, 35. Jesus gebraucht den bestimmten Artikel vor Brot, der in dem Titat fehlt. Moses hat euch nicht das Brot vom Himmel gegeben. Er denkt an ein ganz bestimmtes, einzigartiges Brot, wie er es ja sofort, um allem Mißverständnis vorzubeugen, das rechte, wahrhaftige, ton alethinon, nennt, das Brot, das dem Begriff „Brot vom Himmel“ vollkommen entspricht, das wirklich den Namen Himmelsbrot verdient. Das beweist er: „Denn das Brot Gottes ist das vom Himmel herabkommende und lebengebende der Welt.“ Wie ganz anders als natürliches Brot, als selbst das auf übernatürliche Weise gesandte Manna! Das kam wohl vom Himmel, konnte aber nicht Leben geben. Das diente zur zeitweiligen Erhaltung dieses Erdenlebens, aber Leben geben, wo

feins war, das konnte das Manna nicht. Sogar die Lebenden konnte es nicht vor dem Tode bewahren, wie das das Exempel der Väter beweist; vgl. B. 49. Aber das rechte, wahrhaftige Brot gibt Leben, Leben in des Wortes vollster Bedeutung, nicht nur vergängliches Erdenleben, sondern Leben, das aus dem Himmel kommt, geistliches, göttliches Leben, das wie Gott und sein Himmel ein Leben in Ewigkeit ist. Wo noch nie Leben war, ruft dies Brot Leben hervor; wo Leben ist, gibt es Leben in immer neuer Fülle; wo das Leben nur als schwaches Zündlein brennt, facht es dasselbe zu neuer Flamme an; wo Leben erloschen ist, kann es wieder Leben entzünden. Wo immer aber solch geistliches Leben ist, da ist es gegeben durch dies Brot, das das einzige, wahrhafte Gottesbrot ist. Und dies Leben gibt es der Welt, nicht nur Juden, sondern Heiden, allen Sprachen, Geschlechtern und Völkern. — Man beachte die *participia praes.* herabkommend, gebend, das immerwährende Herabkommen, das unaufhörliche Geben anzeigend. — Wunderbares Himmelsbrot! Vom Himmel kommend, begabt es den Menschen mit himmlischem Leben, erfüllt ihn mit himmlischen Kräften, zieht ihn von der Erde ins himmlische, ewige Leben.

„Da sprachen sie zu ihm: Herr, gib uns allewege solches Brot.“ Aus dem „Herr“ darf man nicht den Schluß ziehen, daß sie zum Glauben gekommen sind; dem steht B. 36 entgegen. Der Titel „Herr“ wurde überhaupt allen Höherstehenden gegeben. So Joh. 4, 11 dem Wanderer, 20, 15 dem Gärtner; 12, 21; Matth. 21, 30. Sie fragen in demselben Sinne wie das Weib Joh. 4, 15, noch immer an materielle Vorteile denkend. Jesus geht jedoch auf ihre Frage ein und bietet ihnen in seinem Wort Brot des Lebens an.

„Ich bin das Brot des Lebens.“ Dies ist das erste der „Ich-bin“-Worte Jesus; vgl. 8, 12; 10, 7. 9; 10, 11. 14; 11, 25; 14, 6; 15, 1. 5. Das sind so recht Heilandsworte, Worte, die in dem Munde irgendeines andern Menschen unerträgliche Selbstüberhebung, abstoßende Prahlerei, schändliche Gotteslästerung wären, aber in seinem Munde Wahrheit sind, ja Geist und Leben; Worte, die nicht nur zum Glauben reizen und locken, sondern die ungezählten hungernden Seelen Himmelsmanna, Lebensbrot geworden sind, aus denen sie sich Leben hier zeitlich und dort ewiglich geholt haben. Man lese die Worte im Grundtext und bewundere den herrlichen Rhythmus sonderlich im dritten Sakglied. „Ich bin das Brot des Lebens.“ Damit knüpft er das, was er von dem Brot Gottes gesagt hat, an seine eigene Person; denn „Brot des Lebens“ ist nur ein kurzer Ausdruck für „das Brot Gottes, das vom Himmel kommt und gibt der Welt Leben“. Hier führt nun Jesus die erquickende, sättigende, nährnde, erhaltende Kraft des Lebensbrotes weiter aus. Man würde erwarten, daß er auf den Eingang: „Ich bin das Brot des Lebens“ fortfahren würde: „Wer mich isset.“ Diesen Ausdruck gebraucht er auch später, B. 50 ff. Aber vorerst liegt es ihm als gutem Lehrer daran, allem Mißverständnis vorzubeugen, als rede er von einem



mündlichen Essen. Wenn nachher die Juden mißverstehen, so tun sie es, trotzdem Jesus ausdrücklich dies Mißverständnis abgewehrt hat, aus Bosheit seine Worte mißdeutend. „Wer zu mir kommt, wer an mich glaubt“, nach Art des hebräischen Parallelismus. Kommen zu Jesu und Glauben an Jesum ist identisch, hat daher auch dieselbe Verheißung, des nimmermehr Hungerns noch Dürstens. Bei Jesu wird Hunger und Durst gestillt, da wird befriedigt das Verlangen nach Vergebung, nach Gerechtigkeit, nach Ruhe im Herzen und Frieden im Gewissen. Bei ihm wird man trunken von den reichen Gütern seines Hauses; er trinkt die Seinen mit Wollust als mit einem Strom, Ps. 36, 9. Und dieses Brot ist so erquickend, so herzerfrischend, so allen Hunger befriedigend, daß man über ihm alle andern Genüsse, wenn nicht ganz vergißt, so doch gern entbehrt und willig aufgibt. In Kraft dieses Brotes ruft man mit Ahasaph: Ps. 73, 25, 26; und mit Paulus: Phil. 3, 7, 8. — „Wer an mich glaubt, den wird nimmermehr dürsten“, nicht dürsten je m a l s, so sagt der Heiland mit Nachdruck; für den gibt es auch in der Ewigkeit kein Dürsten in den Flammen der Hölle, kein vergebliches Lechzen nach einem Tropfen kühlenden Wassers auf die brennende Zunge; nein, „sie wird nicht mehr hungern und dürsten, denn das Lamm mitten im Stuhl wird sie weiden und leiten zu den lebendigen Wasserbrunnen; und Gott wird abwischen alle Tränen von ihren Augen“, Offenb. 7, 16, 17. Aber freilich, das gilt nur denen, die zu ihm kommen, an ihn glauben. In beiden Fällen steht das part. praesens, anzuzeigen, daß nur, solange man glaubt, man dies alles genießt. Der Glaube ist kein einmaliger Akt, sondern unser ganzes Christentum ist ein stetes, immerwährendes Kommen zu Jesu und Glauben an ihn. Beachten wir, wie er als guter Lehrer immer wieder auf sein Thema zurückkommt: „Das ist Gottes Werk, daß ihr glaubet an den, den er gesandt hat.“

Leider waren die Juden noch immer nicht Täter dieses Werkes Gottes geworden, wie Jesus klagt: „Aber ich habe es euch gesagt, daß ihr mich gesehen habt und glaubt doch nicht.“ Damit widerlegt Jesus schlagend ihre Behauptung, V. 30: „daß wir sehen und glauben dir“. Sie hatten gesehen, was Könige und Propheten hatten sehen wollen und nicht gesehen hatten, und doch kann der Herzenskündiger in ihrem Herzen keinen Glauben an ihn finden, kein Fünfklein Verlangens nach dem Lebensbrot, und so lautet sein Urteil: Ihr habt gesehen und glaubt dennoch nicht! Wie mag dem Heiland zumute gewesen sein, als er diese Worte sprach! Alle seine Mühe verloren, alles Mahnen umsonst, alle Zeichen und Wunder vergeblich! Wie traurig, zugleich wie schrecklich: zu sehen und doch nicht zu glauben; es vor Augen zu haben und doch nicht genießen; das Heil so nahe — o so nahe! — zu haben und dennoch fernzubleiben, so fern, als wäre es ihnen nie angeboten worden!

Eine Zeitlang mag wohl der Heiland in tiefes Nachdenken versunken dagestanden haben. Dann hebt er wieder an, und was das Herz voll ist, des geht der Mund über. Man merkt seinen Worten Betrübniß

über den Unglauben seiner Volksgenossen an, aber zugleich Heilandsliebe, die, während sie warnt vor dem Gericht, noch immer lockt und reizt zum Glauben an ihn.

„Alles, was mir der Vater gibt, wird zu mir kommen“, bei mir ankommen. „Was mir der Vater gibt.“ Wie oft bezeichnet der Herr seine Gläubigen als solche, die ihm der Vater gegeben hat oder gibt! B. 39; Joh. 17, 6. 9. 11. 12. 24; 18, 9; 10, 29. Gott hat sie eben aus der verderbten Masse des menschlichen Geschlechts herausgenommen, um sie seinem Sohn als Geschenk darzureichen als Siegesbeute nach schwerem Kampf, als Lohn für treu verrichtete Dienste: Jes. 53, 10—12. Alle aber, die der Vater nach seinem ewigen Gnadenratschluß seinem Sohne als Gabe und Geschenk zugeordnet hat, zieht nun auch der Vater zu dem Sohn, B. 44; die gelangen dann auch bei dem Sohne an, die kommen, mit andern Worten, zum Glauben an ihn; vgl. Röm. 8, 29. 30; Apost. 13, 48. Wenn auch viele, wohl die meisten Juden nichts von ihm wissen wollen, so wird dennoch — das hält sich der Heiland gleichsam selbst zum Trost vor — die Vollzahl der Auserwählten, alles, was ihm der Vater gibt, sich ihm anschließen. Zugleich liegt in diesen Worten, daß das Kommen zu Jesu nicht in des Menschen Kräften steht. „So liegt es nun nicht an jemandes Wollen oder Laufen, sondern an Gottes Erbarmen“, Röm. 9, 16. Wen der Vater nicht dem Sohne gibt, der kommt überhaupt nicht zum Sohn, der bleibt in Ewigkeit von ihm und damit von der Seligkeit fern.

„Wer zu mir kommt, den werde ich nicht hinausstoßen.“ Keinen werde ich abweisen, mag er Jude oder Heide, mag er noch so greulich mit Sünden und Schanden beschmutzt sein. Welch herrliche Offenbarung des liebevollen Heilandsherzens!

Das begründet der Heiland B. 38—40. Nicht seinen eigenen Willen zu tun, ist er gekommen, nicht eigene Ehre, eigenen Vorteil zu suchen, sondern sein Kommen hat seinen Grund im Willen des Vaters (der hat ihn gesandt) und hat zum Zweck, eben diesen Willen des Vaters zu erfüllen. Er kommt als Bote, der nicht eigenmächtig handelt, dessen Willen vielmehr mit dem Willen des, der ihn gesandt hat, ganz und gar übereinstimmt und zusammenfließt, Ps. 40, 9; Joh. 4, 34; 8, 29; 9, 4; 14, 31; 17, 4; Phil. 2, 8. So offenbart sich Jesus als der treue Knecht Gottes, Jes. 42.

Ein wichtiges Stück aber in dem Willen seines Vaters ist die Erhaltung und Seligmachung dessen, was der Vater ihm gegeben hat, B. 39. 40. Wie könnte er da irgendeinen, der zu ihm kommt als ein vom Vater ihm Gegebener, den er nicht verlieren, sondern auferwecken soll am Jüngsten Tage, zurückstoßen? Das ist unmöglich bei ihm, der nicht seinen eigenen Willen zu tun gekommen ist, sondern den Willen des, der ihn gesandt hat.

„Das ist aber der Wille des Vaters, der mich gesandt hat, daß ich nichts verliere von allem, was er mir gegeben hat, sondern daß ich es



auf erwecke am Jüngsten Tage. Das ist aber der Wille des, der mich gesandt hat, daß, wer den Sohn siehet und glaubet an ihn, habe das ewige Leben; und ich werde ihn auferwecken am Jüngsten Tage.“ V. 40 ist nicht müßige Wiederholung von V. 39, sondern weitere Entfaltung des Willens Gottes und zugleich der Beweis, daß Jesu Wille mit dem Willen des Vaters völlig übereinstimmt. Anastoso in V. 39 ist Konjunktiv des Aorists, von *iva* abhängig. In V. 40 ist anastoso Futur, mit emphatisch wiederholtem *εἰς*. Jesus, so will es der Vater haben, soll keinen verlieren; diesen Willen tut der Sohn: er wird keinen verlieren. Der Vater hat die Sünderswelt dem Sohne nicht übergeben, daß er leichtfertigerweise damit umgehe, so daß ihm unversehens dieser oder jener abhanden komme; und der Sohn ist auch nicht gleichgültig, sondern jeden, der ihm gegeben ist, der an ihn glaubt, wird er auferwecken am Jüngsten Tage. Jesus sagt: „Wer den Sohn siehet“, *ὁ θεωρῶν*. Das ist nicht ein vorübergehendes Sehen, ohne Interesse, sondern das angelegentliche, verständnisvolle Anschauen und Betrachten, natürlich hier mit den Augen des Glaubens, wie es ja sofort heißt: „und glaubet an ihn“. Beachten wir, daß Jesus wiederum seine Person in den Vordergrund rückt. *Ὁ θεωρῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτόν*, hat das ewige Leben. Die participia praesentis drücken das Beharrliche des Glaubens aus. Allein wer beharrt bis ans Ende, wird selig. Die Zeitgläubigen gehen verloren. Die gehören aber auch nicht zu denen, die der Vater seinem Sohn gegeben hat. Was der Vater dem Sohne gegeben hat, geht nicht verloren. Und kommt einem Christen die Frage: Gehöre ich zu denen, die dem Sohne vom Vater gegeben sind? so antwortet der Heiland: Das ist der Wille Gottes, daß, wer den Sohn siehet und glaubt an ihn, habe das ewige Leben. Das tu; glaube an den Sohn und sei gewiß, daß der Vater dich mir gegeben hat, daß ich dich nicht verliere, sondern auch dich erhalte bis auf jenen Tag. Die Seligkeit der Gläubigen ist nicht ein ungewisses, zweifelhaftes Ding. Sie ruht in dem Willen des Vaters und in den starken Händen dessen, der vom Vater gesandt ist, diesen Willen auszurichten, Joh. 10, 27—29. Der wird sie vollbereiten, stärken, kräftigen, gründen. Er, der Anfänger und Vollender des Glaubens, wird sie durch alle Gefahren und Versuchungen hindurch fest behalten bis ans Ende. Er wird sie auferwecken am Jüngsten Tage und eben damit beweisen, daß das Wort Wahrheit ist, daß, wer dem Sohn glaubt, habe, *ἔχῃ*, das ewige Leben, nicht erst in ferner Zukunft, sondern schon in diesem Erdenleben. Das neue, geistliche Leben und Wesen, das in den Christen angefangen hat, seit sie leben im Glauben des Sohnes Gottes, ist, eben weil es vom Himmel kommt, weil es ein göttliches Leben ist, zugleich ein ewiges Leben, das auch der Tod nicht zerstören kann. Nach kurzem Todeschlummer wird Jesus seine Christen auferwecken am Jüngsten Tage, da sie dann eingehen in den völligen Genuß des ewigen Lebens, das sie auf Erden schon in ihrem Besiz hatten.

In der Predigt wird man natürlich in Betracht ziehen, daß es der erste Sonntag nach Epiphania ist, für den dieser Text bestimmt ist. Er ist aber voller Epiphaniengedanken. Wir lassen etliche Thematata folgen. Einleitung: Die Juden wollen ein Zeichen seiner Messianität. Er gibt keins, aber eine herrliche Offenbarung seiner selbst. Thema: Jesu Offenbarung vor den Juden zu Kapernaum. 1. Es ist eine Offenbarung durch das Wort, die allein der Glaube faßt; 2. es ist eine Offenbarung herrlichen Inhalts, die allein uns selig macht. — Jesus, das Brot des Lebens. 1. Er ist vom Himmel gekommen und gibt der Welt das Leben. 2. Alles, was ihm der Vater gibt, kommt zu ihm. — Jesus, das Brot des Lebens. 1. Wer zu ihm kommt, den wird nicht hungern; 2. den wird er auferwecken am jüngsten Tage. — Die Epiphanienszeit ruft uns zu: Glaub an den, den Gott gesandt hat! 1. Denn er ist das Brot Gottes. 2. Wer an ihn glaubt, der hat das ewige Leben. — Jesus das Brot des Lebens. 1. Er ist das rechte Brot. 2. Er ist das einige Brot. — Jesus das Brot des Lebens: 1. Er gibt Leben; 2. er stillt Hunger und Durst; 3. er erhält Leben; 4. er führt ins ewige Leben. — Andere Dispositionen: Der Glaube, ein Werk: 1. das gottgefällige, 2. das gottgewirkte. — „Alles, was mir mein Vater gibt, das kommt zu mir.“ Das ist 1. eine tröstliche, 2. eine ernste Wahrheit. Ausgehend von der Frage in V. 28, mache man zum Thema: Das ist Gottes Werk, daß ihr an Jesum glaubt. 1. Dann glaubt ihr an den, den Gott gesandt hat. 2. Dann habt ihr ewiges Leben durch das Brot des Lebens. — Wie stellen sich die Menschen zum Lebensbrot? Von den einen gilt V. 36, von den andern V. 37. — Die Gewißheit unserer Seligkeit. 1. Sie ruht auf dem Willen Gottes des Vaters und der Heilandsliebe Gottes des Sohnes. 2. Sie ist eine Glaubensgewißheit.

Th. L ä t s ch.

### Beichtrede über Ps. 25, 11.

Der 25. Psalm, dem unsere Textworte entnommen sind, ist ein Psalm Davids. Ihm, dem achten und jüngsten Sohn Jesses und dem zweiten König Israels, hat der Heilige Geist diese Worte eingegeben. David, auf deutsch der Geliebte, trug seinen Namen mit Recht; Samuel bezeichnete ihn als einen Mann nach dem Herzen Gottes. Damit ist nicht gesagt, daß David sündlos war. Er kannte und bekannte seine Erbsünde und unterschätzte selten die Gefahren von seiten des Teufels, der gottlosen Welt und seines verderbten Fleisches. Gleichwohl fiel er wiederholt in schwere Sünden: in die Sünde der Verzagt-heit im Unglück, in die Sünde des Ehebruchs mit Urias Weib, in die Sünde des Hochmuts bei der Volkszählung. Durch rechte Buße und wahren Glauben aber stand er durch Gottes Gnade von jedem Fall auf und fand Gnade.

Seine Werke zeigen, daß er ein Liebling Gottes war. Nachdem er



als junger Mann zum Nachfolger des Königs Saul gesalbt worden und des Herrn Geist mächtig über ihn gekommen war, blieb er demütig bei seiner geringen Hirtenarbeit. Durch Gottesfurcht errang er den Sieg über Goliath. Gegen seinen Verfolger Saul erwies er staunenswerthes Mitleid und Erbarmen. Vom Herrn gewirkte Klugheit war es, daß David, nachdem er über sieben Jahre lang als König von Juda zu Hebron regiert hatte, nun, als König über alle Stämme Israels, Jerusalem zur Reichshauptstadt machte. Liebe zu Gottes Wort bewog ihn, die Bundeslade und Stiftshütte nach Jerusalem zu holen, den Plan zu einem prächtigen Tempel zu entwerfen und die Abgötterei der umliegenden Völker zu dämpfen.

Als ein Mann nach dem Herzen Gottes erwies er sich auch durch seine Worte. Davon zeugen alle seine Psalmen, insbesondere auch unser Text, in welchem er seine Beichte vor Gott ablegt. Auf diese laßt uns jetzt unsere Gedanken konzentrieren und betrachten:

### David's Beichte.

1. Sein Bekenntnis;    2. seine Bitte.

#### 1.

„Sei gnädig meiner Missetat!“ sprach David. Er erkannte seine Irrwege als Missetat. Seine Sünde stand vor ihm nicht bloß als Mißachtung des Willens Gottes und Übertretung seines Gebots, sondern als Verbrechen gegen die höchste Majestät, als Sündenschuld vor dem heiligen Gott, die dem Schuldner ewig unbezahlbar ist. Was Wunder daher, daß David klagte: „Meine Kraft ist verfallen vor meiner Missetat, und meine Gebeine sind verschmachtet.“ In unserm Text redet aber David von der Missetat gegen Gott nicht etwa im allgemeinen; er spricht vielmehr: „Sei gnädig meiner Missetat!“ Die Sünde und Schuld erkennt und empfindet er als seine eigene, wie er auch andertwärts sagt: „Ich erkenne meine Missetat, und meine Sünde ist immer vor mir.“ Diese Erkenntnis der Sünde darf uns nicht fehlen, teure Beichtende. Sind wir nicht gleicher Missetat schuldig? In Werken und Worten, Gedanken und Begierden haben wir den Willen unsers Gottes mißachtet, sein Gebot übertreten, die Majestät droben beleidigt und damit schwere, ja unabtragbare Schuld auf unser Gewissen geladen. Täusche dich niemand über den wahren Sachverhalt! So gewiß du gesündigt hast, so gewiß liegt die Schuld der Missetat auf dir, und du, wer du auch seiest, mußt mit David in tiefer Erkenntnis sprechen: „Sei gnädig meiner Missetat!“

David's Bekenntnis geht aber weiter; er sagt: „Sei gnädig meiner Missetat, die da groß ist!“ David wußte, wenn Menschen ihre Missetat verkleinern oder entschuldigen, so ändert das nichts an der Schwere und Schuld der Versündigung. Sie ist jedesmal ein Abweichen von der Richtschnur des göttlichen Gesetzes, eine Übertretung des göttlichen Gebots: „Ihr sollt heilig sein“ und darum eine Beleidigung des

allgewaltigen Schöpfers, vor dem wir armseligen Creaturen nur Staub sind. Jede Missethat, auch wenn Menschen nichts davon wissen oder sie als nichts sagend abweisen, fordert Gottes Mißfallen und Zorn heraus und verdient ewige Strafe. Er selbst, der Geber und Vollstrecker des Gesetzes, droht: „Ich, der Herr, dein Gott, bin ein eifriger Gott, der da heimsuchet der Väter Missethat an den Kindern bis ins dritte und vierte Glied, die mich hassen.“ „Welche Seele sündiget, die soll sterben.“ Unter den Schrecken dieser Zornesstrahlen Sinais ruft David kläglich: „Sei gnädig meiner Missethat, die da groß ist!“

Auch unsere Missethat, meine Beichtenden, ist groß in Ansehung des Herrn, gegen den sie begangen ist. Es ist der Allmächtige, der seine Geschöpfe nicht nur liebevoll versorgt, sondern kraft seiner Allmacht jede Beleidigung aufs äußerste rächen kann. Es ist der Allwissende, der auf den Grund der Seele schaut, alle Beweggründe aufs genaueste kennt und sich durch Verstellungen oder Entschuldigungen nicht täuschen läßt. Es ist der Heilige, den jede, jede Sünde heftiger schmerzt als ein Sandkörnlein im Auge. Es ist der Gerechte, der auf pünktliche Erfüllung seines Gebots dringen muß und von jedem Menschen vollkommene Liebe fordert. Gegen diesen Gott, die Majestät in der Höhe, zu sündigen auch nur mit der leisesten Regung einer Begierde — welche Größe von Missethat! Groß ist jede Missethat aber auch in Ansehung unser selbst. Gesegnet hat uns der Herr im Leiblichen, reich begnadet im Geistlichen. Und wir? Wir haben ihn beleidigt. Groß ist unsere Missethat in Ansehung der Zahl unserer Versündigungen. Die Begehungs- und Unterlassungssünden, deren wir schuldig sind in Werken und Worten seit unserer letzten Kommunion — wer kann sie zählen? Und gedenken wir gar der sträflichen Gedanken und Begierden, durch welche wir stündlich Gottes Gebot übertreten haben, so steigt fürwahr unsere Schuld ins Ungeheure. In tiefer Demut, in Reue und Leid stimmen wir vor dem gegenwärtigen Gott in Davids Bekenntnis ein: „Sei gnädig meiner Missethat, die da groß ist!“

Doch, teure Beichtende, Davids Beichte umschließt nicht nur dieses sein Bekenntnis; betenden Herzen spricht er auch die Bitte aus: „Um deines Namens willen, Herr, sei gnädig meiner Missethat!“

## 2.

Aus diesen Worten sehen wir zunächst, an wen sich David mit seiner Bitte wendet, nämlich an den Herrn, Jehovah. David kannte den Gözen- und Kälberdienst der benachbarten Heidenvölker mit ihrem Baal und Peor und Astaroth und Chamos und Dagon und Moloch usw. Aber er wandte sich nicht an irgendeinen dieser Dreckgötter, wie die Heilige Schrift diese Gözen nennt, um sich nicht gegen das erste Gebot schwer zu versündigen. Er hielt sich an den einen, wahren Gott, dessen Eigentum er durch das Sakrament der Beschneidung geworden war, und den er später im Elternhause und durch die Propheten näher kennenlernte. Ihm trug er seine Bitte vor; zu ihm sprach er: „Nach



dir, Herr, verlangst mich; mein Gott, ich hoffe auf dich. Herr, sei gnädig meiner Missethat!" Unsere Bitte um Vergebung gehört allein vor den Herrn. In unserer Zeit werden noch mehr gökendienerische Wahngestalten angepriesen als zu Davids Zeit. Jedes Heidenvolk hat eine Unmenge von Götzen; auch die heutigen Juden und die Mohammedaner verehren hirnlose Götter. Sogar in der äußeren Christenheit huldigen viele durch ihre Vereinszugehörigkeit und durch den Mund ihrer Vereinskapläne einem albernen Nummenschanz, der nichts als ein elender, selbstersonnener Logengöke ist und weder hören noch erhören kann. Wahre Christen, die sich auf das inspirierte Gotteswort verlassen, rufen den einigen, dreieinigen Gott an, Vater, Sohn und Heiligen Geist. Außer ihm gibt es keinen andern Gott. Er spricht: „Ich, der Herr, das ist mein Name; und will meine Ehre keinem andern geben noch meinen Ruhm den Götzen.“ An diesen Herrn, auf dessen Namen wir getauft sind, den wir im Elternhause, in Schule und Kirche näher kennenlernten, den Gott Davids, wenden wir uns mit unserer Bitte.

Um was David bittet, sagt er mit den Worten: „Sei gnädig meiner Missethat!" Seine Meinung war: In mir selbst ist keine Rettung von der Missethat. Ich bin von Natur ein Sünder, bin aus sündlichem Samen gezeugt, und meine Mutter hat mich in Sünden empfangen. Auch im Stande der Gnade habe ich weder eigenes Verdienst noch eigene Würdigkeit. Hilfe ist auch bei keinem andern Menschen; kann doch kein Bruder den andern erlösen noch Gott jemand versöhnen, denn es kostet zu viel. Auch keine sonstige Kreatur vermag von der Missethat zu erretten, weder die verstorbenen Patriarchen noch die heiligen Engel. Darum werfe ich armer, verlornen Sünder mich in die Arme deines Erbarmens und flehe dich an: „Wende dich zu mir und sei mir gnädig! Wasche mich wohl von meiner Missethat und reinige mich von meiner Sünde! Verbirg dein Antlitz von meinen Sünden und tilge alle meine Missethat!" Genau so müssen wir es machen, wollen wir Vergebung erlangen. Irrwege ins Verderben laufen alle, die auf ihre Werke oder die vermeintlichen Verdienste anderer Kreaturen vertrauen. Niemand und nichts als allein Gott kann aus eigener Machtvollkommenheit Sünde vergeben. Er ist der Beleidigte; er muß die Verzeihung gewähren. Und dazu kann ihn keine Kreatur nötigen und von ihm Erlassung der Schuld fordern. Wahre Vergebung beruht ausschließlich in seinem freien Willen, in seiner Barmherzigkeit. Darum preisen die Heiligen so oft Gottes Gnade. David lobsingt: „Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr, geduldig und von großer Güte; er handelt nicht mit uns nach unsern Sünden und vergilt uns nicht nach unserer Missethat. Denn so hoch der Himmel über der Erde ist, läßt er seine Gnade walten über die, so ihn fürchten.“ Paulus rühmt: „So an einer Sünde viele gestorben sind, so ist viel mehr Gottes Gnade und Gabe vielen reichlich widerfahren durch die Gnade des

einigen Menschen, Jesu Christi.“ Auf diese Gottesgnade vertraute der Zöllner im Tempel in seinem Herzensgebet: „Gott, sei mir Sünder gnädig!“ Darum sprechen auch wir mit David: „Sei gnädig meiner Missethat, die da groß ist!“

Was David zu dieser zuversichtlichen Bitte bewog, zeigen seine Worte: „Um deines Namens willen, Herr.“ Gott hat sich als den Herrn, den Bundesherrn, geoffenbart, als er den ersten Sündern die Verheißung gab, der Weibessame solle der Höllenschlange den Kopf zertreten; als er mit Abraham, dem Vater der Gläubigen, den Bund schloß: „Durch deinen Samen sollen alle Völker auf Erden gesegnet werden“; als er bei der Gesetzgebung verkündete: „Ich tue Barmherzigkeit an vielen Tausenden, die mich lieben“; als er bei der Auswanderung aus Ägypten Israel in der Wolken- und Feuersäule begleitete; als er durch Jesaias, den alttestamentlichen Evangelisten, proklamierte: „Ich, ich tilge deine Übertretung um meinetwillen und gedenke deiner Sünden nicht.“ Seinen Namen als den Bundesherrn hat der Herr geoffenbart, als der Sohn Gottes zu Bethlehlem Fleisch ward, unter den Menschenkindern wandelte und schließlich an Stelle der Sünderwelt auf Golgatha in den Tod stieg. Dieser Name Gottes ist auch uns wohlbekannt; wir kennen ihn aus seinem Wort, das wir lieben und fleißig lesen, und lernen ihn immer besser kennen.

Um dieses Namens, des verheißenen Messias, willen vertraut David zuversichtlich auf Erhörung. Darum bekannte er dem Propheten Nathan: „Ich habe gesündigt wider den Herrn!“ Und Nathan sprach zu ihm: „So hat auch der Herr deine Sünde weggenommen; du wirst nicht sterben.“ Und in unserm Psalm hören wir ihn beten: „Gedenke, Herr, an deine Barmherzigkeit und an deine Güte, die von der Welt her gewesen ist! Gedenke nicht der Sünden meiner Jugend und meiner Übertretung; gedenke aber mein nach deiner Barmherzigkeit um deiner Güte willen!“ Wir neuteamentlichen Gläubigen haben sogar vollere Offenbarung, als David hatte. Wir wissen: „Gott war in Christo und versöhnete die Welt mit ihm selber“, indem er ihnen ihre Sünden nicht zurechnete. „Siehe, das ist Gottes Lamm, welches der Welt Sünde trägt!“ Der Apostel Johannes schreibt ausdrücklich, „daß euch die Sünden vergeben werden durch seinen Namen“. Um dieses Jesusnamens willen ist Gott uns ein Versöhner, und wir bitten erhörlich: „Um deines Namens willen, Herr, sei gnädig meiner Missethat, die da groß ist!“

Diesen Glauben wollen wir, geliebte Christen, heute stärken durch das Wort der Absolution und den Genuß des heiligen Nachmahls. Wohl dem, dem die Übertretungen vergeben sind, dem die Sünde bedeckt ist; wohl dem Menschen, dem der Herr die Missethat nicht zurechnet, in des Geists kein Falsch ist! Lassen wir beides, unser Bekenntnis und unsere Bitte, ernst sein; dann gefällt dem Herrn, wie Davids Beichte, so auch die unsrige. Das waltete Gott! Amen.

P. E i d s t ä d t.



## Outlines on Old Testament Texts.

### New Year.

#### Ps. 121.

The Christian's attitude to life differs in practically every particular from that of the unbeliever. The latter seeks the fulfilment of all his hopes and desires in the things of this world, in the so-called joys and lusts which this life offers to him who seeks the fulfilment of all his longings in doing what pleases him according to his old evil flesh. This attitude is seen especially at the end of an old and at the beginning of a new year. The children of the world celebrate this event in keeping with their own evil inclinations. Their whole attitude with regard to life may be summed up in the ancient statement: Let us eat and drink and be merry, for to-morrow we shall be dead. — The Christian, on the other hand, is reminded at this time of the constant change which goes on about him and of the end of life and the end of the world. His thoughts are well summarized in the prayer of Moses, the man of God. Ps. 90. And as he looks forward into the new year, his entire attitude may well be summarized in the words of our text.

#### REASSURING COMFORT FOR THE NEW YEAR.

1. *The basis of this comfort;*
2. *The significance of this comfort.*

#### 1.

The first part of our psalm treats of the *basis* of the true comfort for the new year. Vv. 1 to 4.

a. The certainty of the Christian's help is expressed in the prayer with which the psalm opens, in which the determined statement is made that a Christian will always lift up his eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh his help. Hills are symbols for power and strength. The mountains have ever impressed men with this feature. When the Christian asks, From whence cometh my help? his own heart and the Word of God give him the assurance that his help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. Here the creative power of the God in whom the Christians trust is set forth. He is almighty, His power governs all things. Without His will not a hair of the believers can fall to the ground. Matt. 6, 25—34.

b. The untiring vigilance of God. This is the second point which forms the basis of the believer's comfort at the beginning of a new year. God is not only the almighty Father, but He is also a very present Help in need. The feet of His children cannot be moved by them unless He so decides or permits. He keeps them with slumberless vigilance. Unlike Baal, of whom Elijah scornfully said that he might be taking a nap, the true God neither slumbers nor sleeps. He

keepeth Israel, that is, all His children, so that no harm can befall them.

What a wonderful basis of true comfort in these statements! Let the enemies bring on all their subtlety and all their power; let them try in every possible way to harm those who have turned to God in true faith,—they are safe in the hands of their heavenly Father, of their almighty Creator, who watches over them with untiring vigilance, with unfailing kindness.

## 2.

The second part of our psalm sets before the Christian the significance of the comfort which is briefly pictured in the first verses. We see here what it means to have God on our side, so that no enemy may do us harm.

a. The Christians have protection in the vicissitudes of life. The thought of the last paragraph is here once more taken up and emphasized, for the Lord is their Keeper; cp. v. 4. This is further explained in the statement that the Lord is their shade upon their right hand. This signifies that the protection of the Lord is on every side of them, so that nothing can harm them. The picture which is given of the sun smiting by day and the moon by night is taken from conditions in the Orient, where the power of the sun is even greater than on a hot day in our climate, while the rays of the moon are feared for their evil effects. The picture is explained in v. 7, where we are told that the Lord preserves His children from all evil; cp. Seventh Petition. The highest and most comforting assurance is that of the words: "He shall preserve thy soul." Compare the words in the hymn of Luther: "And take they our life," etc.

b. The significance of this comfort is found also in the assistance given with regard to the duties of this life. The Lord not only keeps and defends His children from all evil, but He also helps them directly in all things which they undertake in the service of Himself and of their neighbor. The words "going out" and "coming in" are descriptive of all the ordinary conditions to be found in the life of the believer; cp. Ps. 91, 3—13. — The comfort of this assurance is immediately evident to every one who puts his trust in the Lord. Whether our station in life be high or low, whether it be connected with much or little honor, whether it bring us a great deal of the world's goods or barely enough to sustain life, we are sure that the Lord is with us from this time forth and even forevermore. K.

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### Sunday after New Year.

LAM. 3, 22—33.

A. Reasons for a special meditation on this Sunday. 1) Christians do not begin the new year as do the unbelievers; they begin all things with Christ. Gen. 28, 20—22. 2) They are grateful for the



blessings received in the past. Gen. 32, 10. 3) They desire to walk more closely with God each coming year, to increase in faith, love, and holiness. Ps. 86, 11. 4) Christians must expect trials and afflictions in the future as they had them in the past. John 17, 15; Matt. 6, 13; Is. 45, 7. — B. Hence it is fitting that we seek the instruction and comfort God's Word gives us especially on this day, the first Sunday in the new year. How sorely we need God's comfort in this evil age, when the end of time is rapidly approaching! Let us, then, consider: —

*GOD'S ABUNDANT GRACE OUR COMFORT  
IN THE NEW YEAR.*

Let us consider —

1. *How abundantly God's grace is assured us;*
2. *When we may truly comfort ourselves with God's grace.*

1.

A. *How abundantly God's grace is assured to us in the text!*

a. All men need and seek comfort in life, even the unbelieving children of this world, who "walk in a vain show." Ps. 39, 5. 6. But they hope to find it 1) in health and strength, 2) in wealth, 3) in their standing and station of life. — b. Christians seek comfort where true comfort may be found. God's grace is their comfort, as the text, v. 24, assures us. Ps. 73, 23—28.

B. How abundant is this divine grace! a. His mercies and compassions never fail. V. 22. 1) This was true of Israel, even at this time, when Samaria was destroyed and Judah was in exile. How great were the mercies before the destruction came, when it came, and when the exile was over! The Lord preserved Israel in His abundant mercy. 2) This is true of our nation and country. (Expand.) 3) This is true of our Church, our congregation, and our own lives. (Expand.) It is because of the Lord's mercy "that we are not consumed," as we have deserved on account of our sins of ingratitude and indifference, neglect of God and transgression of His commandments. — b. God's mercies increase from day to day. "They are new every morning." V. 23. For each increasing difficulty there is increasing grace. (Expand.) This is because of His faithfulness ("great is Thy faithfulness") 1) in temporal and 2) in spiritual things. The Lord increases His grace upon us because He is the faithful God, who keeps every promise to succor us in body and soul. — c. God's mercies reveal themselves in actual blessings bestowed upon us. V. 25: "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him." He is merciful not only inasmuch as He helps us in every need, but also in showering upon us His benedictions. 1) First Article. Fourth Petition. 2) His Word and Sacraments. — d. God's mercies encompass us in our afflictions. Vv. 31—33. 1) He does not

cast off forever. V. 31. How brief the days of evil compared with the many days of joy! 2) He lightens our burdens of cross and trial by His merciful presence. V. 32; 1 Cor. 10, 13; story of Job. Paul: 2 Cor. 12, 9. 3) He sorrows over our afflictions, which He does not impose upon us as a tyrant, who takes pleasure in the suffering of others. V. 33; Luke 7, 13; John 11, 35. Trials work together for our good. Rom. 8, 28. Israel. — e. How great is God's grace! Our precious text exhibits divine grace from every angle.

C. God's grace, then, is our comfort in the new year. a. It is true comfort; for God is not only able to abide with us, but also willing to do so. — b. It is comfort which God has revealed to us for *our* comfort; let us, then, seek it and put our trust in God's grace. — c. It is comfort which satisfies the heart; for He who has given it knows our heart, its troubles, and its needs. — d. It is comfort which untold millions of Christians have experienced. Text: Jeremiah. Let us, then, trust in God's abundant grace for a blessed new year.

However, our text suggests to us another important thought for consideration. Let us consider *when we may truly comfort ourselves with God's grace.*

## 2.

A. While God's grace is in store for all sinners, the majority of men exclude themselves from it: a. all unbelievers, who do not believe that God is gracious and therefore despise His merciful offers; b. all nominal Christians, or hypocrites, whose service is not sincere. Is. 29, 13; Matt. 15, 8. Let us beware of formalism and externalism!

B. Our text pictures to us a true Christian who may comfort himself with God's grace. a. He sets his affections on the things above, having made the Lord his Portion. V. 24. First three commandments: "Fear, love, and trust in God above all things." "Pray, praise, and give thanks." "Loves His Word." Ps. 73, 25. 26. Jeremiah, the devoted servant of God. — b. He waits for the Lord and seeks Him. V. 25. He is a true believer, who constantly trusts in God and whose faith is preserved through meditation of God's Word. — c. He brings forth true fruits of faith: 1) hope and patience, vv. 24b. 26; 2) obedience; he bears the yoke, his cross, cheerfully, vv. 27. 28; 3) humbleness; he walks in humility before God and man, v. 29a (meaning: he lives in a state of deep humility); 4) love; he continues in love toward his neighbor though he is wronged, v. 30 (meaning: he has the love that is not provoked; he is not quarrelsome nor apt to resent injuries; he suffers long and is kind). — d. In short, only he who through faith is a true child of God may comfort himself with the grace of God. What a much-needed lesson for us to-day!

C. a. Let us, then, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be true children of God that we may comfort ourselves with His gracious promises. 1) Let us through faith make God our Portion, our One



and All. 2) Let us in true faith seek Him at all times and wait for Him. 3) Let us be hopeful and patient in our affliction. Let us walk in humility before God as poor sinners that live of His grace. 4) Let us love our neighbor, even as God has loved us and has forgiven us our trespasses. — b. Neither through our faith, as a good work nor by the fruits of our faith do we render ourselves worthy of God's grace. By grace we are justified, sanctified, and preserved in faith unto everlasting life. Our salvation rests not in our own hands, but in the gracious hands of God. The grace of God is our only comfort in life and death. Eph. 2, 8—10. But for that very reason we have comfort, abiding, abundant, ineffable comfort. — c. Blessed indeed are all who seek comfort in God's grace. Amen.

St. Louis, Mo.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

### Epiphany.

Is. 60, 1—6.

Epiphany has been celebrated from ancient times as the Christmas festival of the Gentiles. Although originally the actual festival of the nativity of Christ, it became, about the end of the first century, the special festival for such as had been gained for the Lord from the various Gentile nations. This fact is emphasized by the ancient Gospel-lesson for the day, which shows us the first Gentiles coming to worship the new-born King. — The special significance of the day is emphasized also in our present text, which concerns the conditions of the present world even more emphatically now that we are realizing the full scope of our missionary duty.

#### THE GREAT MISSIONARY APPEAL TO THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

1. *What it signifies;*
2. *What success it promises.*

#### 1.

Our entire text is a powerful appeal from the great Evangelist of the Old Testament to the Church of the New Testament. And both the motive and the meaning of the appeal are given at the beginning of the text.

a. It reminds the believers of the fact that the Messiah has come. V. 1b. As Zacharias says in his prayer of thanksgiving: The Day-star from on high has arisen and has visited us. Luke 1, 78.

b. At the same time there is still great darkness over a large part of the earth. V. 2a. Millions of men throughout the world have not yet heard the glorious news of the salvation in Christ Jesus, which alone is able to impart true spiritual light to the soul. This darkness is pictured also in other parts of Scripture; cp. Eph. 5, 11; 1 Thess. 5, 5; 1 John 2, 11.

c. Therefore the call goes out: "Arise, shine!" V.1a. "Arise," as from sleep or inactivity. "Shine," as the light which the Lord has chosen for that purpose. As the Lord has arisen, so the Christians are to arise, and as His glory has appeared to them, so they are to make known His glory, the glory of salvation in Christ Jesus, to men everywhere. Such is the significance of the missionary appeal to the New Testament Church.

## 2.

The appeal of the Evangelist of the Old Testament has an unusual force and power because it not only speaks of a duty which is to be performed by the Christians of the New Testament, but also gives a wonderful promise concerning the success of the message which is to be sent out by the Church.

a. The joyful coming of the Gentiles is pictured. By way of example the Lord gives the names of a number of tribes and nations which would be among the first ones to be gained for the message of the Redeemer. Midian is mentioned (southeast of Palestine), Ephah and Sheba (in the Arabian wilderness), Kedar (in the southern part of Arabia Deserta), the Nebaioth (sons of Ishmael in Arabia Petraea), the isles, that is, all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, and Tarshish, representing all of Spain. The picture is that of a joyful coming to receive the message and the fruits of salvation. Vv. 6a—9.

b. The joyful coming of the Gentiles is due to the conviction of their hearts, and they are glad to bring the sacrifices of their hands. The Lord says that the abundance of the sea shall be converted, and the forces of the Gentiles shall come. This indicates that the Lord, through the message of His Church, will make known to them the glory of the Messiah and will call them to the fellowship of Jesus Christ, His Son. — Nor will this message be without its effect upon the lives of the believers from the Gentiles. As the Wise Men from the East brought their gifts to the new-born Christ-child, so the Gentiles who have been gained by the message of the Gospel will freely bring their gifts as the sacrifice of love to the King of Grace. Vv. 6b. 9b. — And not only will the believers of the Gentiles gladly bring their wealth for the purposes of the Kingdom, but they will be ready to minister to the Lord in every other way, so that sons of strangers will build up the walls of Zion and their kings will minister to the Church and to the Lord of the Church. V. 10. — Such is the success of the Word which we, as children of the Gentiles, have received, and such is the success which is promised to our neighbors through the power of the spirit in the Word which we have proclaimed.

And so both appeal and promise are brought in v. 11 as a summary, in order to encourage all Christians to be zealous in the work of missions and to have the kingdom of God come to them continually.



## First Sunday after Epiphany.

Ps. 78, 1—7.

"Give ear, O my people, to my teaching" (N. B. תִּזְכֹּר, etc. V. 1. Thus Asaph, the Levite (his genealogy, 1 Chron. 6, 39—43), the seer (2 Chron. 29, 30), the prophet (Matt. 13, 35), pleadingly appeals to his hearers for undivided attention and willing obedience to his divine message (Cf. Ps. 49, 1 f.; Matt. 13, 9; Rev. 2, 7a.)

His message to his people, to God's people, God's inheritance, v. 70 f., will be in parabolic style (מִשְׁלָּה), a form of teaching peculiar to Old Testament didactic literature and also to Jesus' teaching (Matt. 13, 34, 35), and will consist of "dark sayings," obscure statements, "riddles," oracles (חִידָה = *perplexed dictum*), "of old," from Israel's ancient national beginnings onward, v. 2; cf. Ps. 49, 5. Being God's flock, v. 71 f.; Ps. 77, 21, they will give heed and understand, John 10, 4, 14.

And what is the important message of Asaph? With the zeal of the true prophet he reminds God's people of their sacred obligation to "the generation to come," vv. 4, 6, *viz.*, to transmit to it the history of God's wonderful ways and its spiritual application for doctrine and admonition, Rom. 15, 4; 1 Cor. 10 f. This is but one of the Church's duties to her children, but a most important one. Studying our text, let us engraft upon our hearts —

### THE CHURCH'S DUTY TO TEACH HER CHILDREN SACRED HISTORY.

1. Its basis;
2. Its aim.

#### 1.

Sacred history is described in our text as, literally, "*that which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us,*" v. 3, the record of "the praises of the Lord," of those acts which cause all who hear and read them to glorify God, and of "His strength," manifested unto the terror of His foes and unto the comfort and consolation of His friends, His people, and of "His wonderful works that He hath done," v. 4. In other words, for us of the present day sacred history is the narrative of God's wonderful ways as recorded in the Bible, together with the moral and religious applications made.

Is this teaching of sacred or Biblical history commanded by God? Our text says: v. 5. (Make known what is contained in v. 4.) *NB.* Asaph is not speaking here of the duty enjoined Deut. 6, 7—9. 20—25 regarding the diligent teaching of the *laws* revealed through Moses, but of a divine command regarding the great wonders and works of God among His people as we have it Ex. 13, 3. 8. 14; Deut. 4, 9, etc. These, the so called *magnalia Dei*, we are enjoined to teach the generation to come. Acts 2, 11.

Thus the 78th Psalm, of which our text is merely the intro-

duction, reviews the history of Israel from their last days in "the field of Zoan," in Egypt, vv. 12. 43, on through their sojourn in the wilderness and the long period of the Judges, Acts 13, 20, down to the time of King David, an interval of over five hundred years. And in doing so, Asaph is performing a divine duty to his generation. Note well, however, that this marvelous retrospect is no mere recital of barren historical facts or events, — sacred history never is; — it is, as the title of the psalm indicates, a *maschil*, a didactic, doctrinal meditation, a living, effective, self-evidencing, powerful religious lesson, warning his generation of believers, and those to come, against the terrible sin of apostasy; for God, the Most High, vv. 17. 35, the Holy One of Israel, v. 41 (Isaiah's favorite name of God), will not be mocked either by Gentile (Egyptians) or by Jew, Gal. 6, 7.

All histories preceding and succeeding Asaph's selection in Ps. 78 are to be taught and thus applied; for: Rom. 15, 4; 1 Cor. 10, 11; 2 Tim. 3, 16. It is an essential and divinely prescribed part of "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," Eph. 6, 4; cf. the twelve-year old Christ in the Temple, both hearing the doctors and asking them questions. Samuel. Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice teaching him "from a child" the Holy Scriptures. 2 Tim. 1, 5; 3, 15; cf. Matt. 13, 52.

Thus it is God's will and command that we teach sacred history and its divine lessons to the future generation, the children in our midst.

## 2.

Having seen that our duty to teach the children Bible History and its lessons is based upon God's express command, our text next describes the aim and purpose of such teaching. What does God wish to accomplish in placing this duty upon the Church?

Our text answers: 1) "That the generation to come might know them," etc. V. 6a. How shall it know except it be taught? How would and how could we have known if our spiritual forefathers, the preceding generation of believers, had not taught us? Cf. Acts 8, 31; Rom. 10, 14. 2) That they, the present generation of children in the Church, "should arise and declare [tell] them," *i. e.*, the ways and works of God, "to their children," v. 6b, thus insuring the continuance of the living Church here on earth by continuing the line of confessors and teachers of "the faith that was once delivered unto the saints," Jude 3; for "it pleased God *by . . . preaching* to save them that believe," 1 Cor. 1, 21. (Perpetuity of the Church.) 3) That they might put their confidence in God, v. 7a, trust in Him, believe in Him as the only true God, their God, their Rock, their Redeemer, v. 35, with all their soul, heart, and mind. 4) That they might "not forget the works of God," v. 7b, a thing the human heart is but too prone to do, as the history of Israel, reviewed by Asaph in this psalm,



and beyond that, as well as the history of the New Testament Church, abundantly proves. 5) That they might "keep His commandments." V. 7c. Remembering the manifestations of divine anger upon those who stubbornly and rebelliously resisted God's will, they should take heed that they "set their heart aright" toward God at all times and their spirit be "steadfast with God" (v. 8, positive).

All these various aims stated by our text can be summarized in one: loyal and faithful adherence to God, the living God. This is, and at all times ought to be, the one and only aim of the Church's teaching, whether in school, Sunday-school, confirmation instruction, or divine worship.

That this aim of the Church's teaching is not always accomplished is not due to any faults committed in the things taught, as Jesus' parable of the Sower shows. Matt. 13. Effectual and powerful as is the teaching of sacred history and its lessons, the experience of the Old Testament and New Testament Church abundantly shows that it is resistible. But wherever the aim of the Church, which is also God's aim, is accomplished, there the believer will confess with another psalmist: Ps. 119, 105, and will agree with Jesus: Luke 11, 28.

While we are aware that also in these things we now see through a glass, darkly, and know in part, 1 Cor. 13, 12, and while we realize now why Asaph said he would speak dark sayings in a parable, v. 2, yet we have Moses and the prophets and the New Testament. Let us continue to hear them and let us resolve anew to-day: We will not hide them from, but tell them, teach them diligently and devoutly to, our children! Text, v. 4.

NOTE. — Thirteen psalms are entitled *maschil*, i. e., a reflective poem embodying "instruction": Pss. 32. 42. 44. 45. 52—55. 74. 78. 88. 89. 142. Twelve psalms: 50. 73—83, the bulk of the third book of the Psalter, are attributed to Asaph. Both groups are worthy of most thorough and sustained study and will yield rich results to the sermonizer.

Los Angeles, Cal.

O. W. WISMAR.

## Second Sunday after Epiphany.

Ps. 104, 24—35.

Various divine epiphanies, manifestations. (Hymn 184.) The 104th Psalm is an exhortation to extol the praises of God for His glory as manifested in His works of creation and preservation. Vv. 1a. 35b.

### "PRAISE YE THE LORD!"

Our text calls attention

1. To some of the revealed glories of God that should solicit our praises; and shows
2. How we should show forth the Lord's praises.

## 1.

a. Praise ye the Lord *for the manifold works of creation!* Vv. 24—26. In the midst of the psalm the inspired writer breaks forth in the exclamation: "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!" He admires the *wisdom* exhibited in all the works of the Creator. V. 24a. There is no chance in nature, but a universal natural law is laid down by Him for them all. Principle of design in mineral, plant, and animal creation. Graebner's *Evolution*, chap. XI: "Evidence of Design." Weseloh's *Die Herrlichkeit Gottes in der Natur*. "The earth is full of Thy riches." V. 24b. Natural resources, coal, oil, gems, gold, etc., deposited in the earth. There are grasses, flowers, trees, mountains. Evidences everywhere of the riches of God. He is not niggardly in bestowing His gifts. "So is this great and wide sea." Vv. 25. 26. When God creates water to assuage our thirst, to delight our eye, to serve our many needs, He does not merely dole it out in drops, but lavishes water upon us in springs and rivers and oceans. There is the great and wide sea! Mighty ships plying its waters, leviathans playing in its bosom. The glories of a sunset at sea. "Wherein are things . . . innumerable," from the tiny zoophyte, which builds its coral house, to huge sea monsters bent on prey. The wonders of the ocean bed.

b. Praise ye the Lord *for His kind providence.* Vv. 27—31. "These wait all upon Thee," and not in vain. Vv. 27. 28. We marvel when we see a modern kitchen of a mammoth metropolitan hotel in operation; we are interested in the feeding facilities of a large circus; however, every one of the billions of creatures in plant and animal life absolutely depend on the great Provider to give each individual its peculiar and proper food "in due season." Ps. 136, 25; 145, 15. 16; 147, 9. The Fourth Petition. — "Thou renewest the face of the earth." Vv. 29. 30. The grass of the field withers, lilies are plucked, sparrows fall to the ground, man's body returns to dust, yet: Matt. 10, 29—31. Despite constant death and decay the same wild rose blushes to-day that adorned the woods ages ago. The wheat found in the hands of Egyptian mummies of the hoary past is the kind that grows in the Nile Valley to-day. While the earth remains, shall be in effect the word of the Creator: Gen. 1, 11. 12. 22. 24. 25. 28; 8, 22. — Yea, the glory of this present state of things might pass away, yet "the glory of the Lord shall endure forever." V. 31. There is a wise plan in all of God's works. The present does not exist for itself, but for the future. This scaffold shall be removed in order that greater and eternal glories of God may be revealed to the everlasting joy of His heart.

c. We are to praise the Lord even *for His gracious chastisements.* V. 32. Surely it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb. 10, 31. If the earth trembles and the hills smoke at His



touch, where will the sinner stand when He is made to feel the heavy hand and the outstretched arm of an angered God? Yet God warns before He punishes (the Flood; Babylonian Captivity; Jerusalem; Jonah 4, 2; Judgment Day, Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 2, 3, 4). For the Christian, however, these are gracious chastisements, for which he is to praise God. Pss. 91. 121. 46; Rom. 8, 28.

## 2.

a. "I will sing unto the Lord." V. 33. God's glories are to be extolled. For this reason He called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. This I am to do "as long as I live." Every day, whether it be cloudy or whether there be sunshine. Now, "while I have my being," is the accepted time. (Hymns 292. 293.) Ps. 100, 2.

b. However, we must think before we thank. V. 34. Otherwise we are prone to forget all His benefits. A quiet meditation such as the psalmist institutes in this psalm will attune our hearts to gladness and cheerful songs of thanksgiving. Ps. 100, 2. (Hymn 358, 2; 72, 2; 64, 2.)

c. Not only we ourselves are to praise the Lord, but it should be our aim to arouse others to extol the glories of God. V. 35: "O *my* soul"; "praise *ye* the Lord." To this end it should be our endeavor with God's help to strive that, if possible, "the wicked be no more." If all were converted to God by the Gospel of Christ, there would be no discord in the hymn of praise arising from this earth, which is so full of the riches of the Lord.

Cleveland Heights, O.

H. W. BARTELS.

## Third Sunday after Epiphany.

DAN. 6, 10—23.

Princes, rulers, persons in authority, are an ordinance of God. His ordinances, one and all, are good and are intended for the good of mankind. Cp. Table of Duties.

In a measure we must put our trust in them. There is a confidence of man to man and of subjects to their rulers which is legitimate and which God demands of us. Should we not pray for them? It would be against the law of love to mistrust them. And what misery that would entail!—But our text reminds us of the truth:

*"IT IS BETTER TO TRUST IN THE LORD THAN  
TO PUT CONFIDENCE IN PRINCES."*

1. *Confidence in princes may involve the loss of our most sacred heritage;*
2. *Trust in the Lord redounds to our temporal and eternal welfare.*

## 1.

Daniel enjoyed the confidence of various rulers without stint or limit. Dan. 2, 48; 4, 15f.; 5, 13; 6, 3. His was an enviable distinction, all the more so since he was one of "the children of the captivity of Judah," Dan. 5, 13; 6, 13. God at times confers the highest honors upon some of the humblest of his children.

In their jealous rage his backbiting competitors concocted a satanic scheme against him, v. 7, dogged his steps to obtain evidence, v. 11 (not v. 13: "three times a day"), cunningly reminded Darius of the irrevocable laws of the Medes and Persians, v. 12, and of the fact that Daniel was merely one of that despicable nation held in bondage.—Such chicaneries are pressed into service by the children of the devil to this day. Luther, *e. g.*, vilified because a mere monk, who had started a brawl among monks.

High honors are always paired with grave responsibilities. Daniel was brought face to face with the rigid law of his ruler, and a notable array of prominent men supported that iniquitous piece of legislation. V. 7. Death in the lions' den. No liberty of conscience in this case.—Every Christian, according to his station in life, must meet similar situations. Broad-minded people frequently exhibit a lamentable measure of narrow-mindedness when the Christian's conduct is involved. A great temptation. All the greater, however, if we occupy high positions. Are they worthy to be coveted?

Two alternatives: Either Daniel obeys his ruler, continues to enjoy the distinctions conferred upon him, cp. v. 3, and bends his knees in idolatrous worship, or he stoutly refuses to obey, relinquishes all honors, and meets death as a true child of God. It meant much in either case, but far more in the latter.—Submitting to the godless world, yielding to the advances of guileful errorists, yoking ourselves together with unbelievers in the lodge involves as much to-day. Are you aware of the sacrifice? Are you willing to renounce your most sacred faith for the tinsel and nonsense of this world?

Daniel believed that for him it would prove disastrous to prefer the favor of princes to the favor of God. How despicable the king appears, who did not want to exact the extreme punishment, vv. 16. 18ff., and still yielded to Daniel's enemies! And his preference for the one thing needful to the fading glories of this little world redounded to his benefit.—The same is in store for you if you follow his lofty example. You cannot always depend on men, but God never fails you.

## 2.

Fully conscious of the dire issue, Daniel continued to perform his duties as a child of God. He did not forget the First Commandment. V. 10. He did not howl with the wolves. Obedience to God's commandment meant all to him, and the possible fatal results neither



troubled him nor deterred him. Childlike faith. He believed Ps. 118, 17. — Let it be your first concern that you may always be found sincerely obedient to God's will and commandment. As soon as you begin to weigh the arguments of flesh and blood, you are placed in sorry straits.

If Daniel had obeyed the king's treacherous law, a bad conscience would have been his lot in the midst of all his earthly glory. And what would that have meant in the hour of death? But in bravely heeding God's will, his conscience was at ease. — What do you prefer, a good or a bad conscience? What when you are in the agonies of death? How conscience may torture us in that solemn hour! But what a relief to remind ourselves of the performance of a serious duty in our last moments!

God proved Himself the God of salvation and manifested His glory by His mighty help in the hour of gravest danger. V. 22f. And by His help He gave Daniel the sweet assurance of his state of grace. — The Lord is an ever-present Helper of His children. Cp. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Moses, Luther. Does not your state of grace mean all to you?

Note how Darius was impressed by this eventful deed of God. V. 25ff. — Denial of the truth is disastrous not only to the faithless Christian, but also to others. A brave and consistent confession, however, redounds not only to his benefit, but also to the benefit of others.

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes Cp. 118, 8f. (Luther's favorite psalm). Follow the example of the fearless confessors of the truth. B.

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#### Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

1 KINGS 19, 9b—18.

We are living in an age of many churches and of empty churches; in a time of apostasy; the love of many has grown cold. There are those outside of the pale of Christianity who hold that Christianity has outlived its usefulness, has become fossilized and antiquated. Within the visible Church there are many who no longer accept the fundamental truths by which the Christian religion is distinguished from all false faiths. Attacks from without and within have weakened the influence of the churches. Many who seek the welfare of the Church and wish to save it from utter destruction are devoting much time and effort to this cause, but with little result, because they are using the wrong means of building the Church of God. Unionism, compromise with error, lodgery, community

churches, legalism, making the pulpit a forum for the discussion of secular topics, making the State the servant of the Church,—all these are not the divinely prescribed means for building the kingdom of God on earth.

### THE GOD-GIVEN MEANS OF BUILDING THE CHURCH OF GOD.

1. *The preaching of the Law.*
2. *The preaching of the Gospel.*

#### 1.

Our text takes us back to the days of Elijah, the prophet. He lived and labored in an evil age. The chosen people had fallen away from the worship of Jehovah; they were following after the gods of their heathen neighbors, Baal and Ashtoreth, and had degenerated to the carnal and immoral level of these idolaters. Elijah had labored long and zealously against heavy odds. (Give *résumé* of Elijah's work from preceding chapters.) He had gained a victory on Mount Carmel. Chap. 18. But his reward was increased opposition on the part of Jezebel. 19, 1ff. (Parallel: John the Baptist and Herodias. Matt. 14; Luke 6.)

Discouraged, the prophet asks to die. He has done all he could, but with no apparent results. The Church of God has been utterly destroyed. He sees no further need of continuing his labors. "It is enough," etc.

But the Lord teaches His prophet a necessary lesson. At Horeb (where Moses had received a wonderful revelation, Ex. 33, 18ff.) the Lord speaks to him. Elijah's complaint is given in the text. Vv. 10, 14.

In reply the Lord gives Elijah a glorious revelation. V. 11. "A great and strong wind" (cp. Acts 2, 2), followed by an earthquake and fire, preceded the "still, small voice."

What would the Lord teach the prophet by these signs?

The first three represent the divine Law, given in thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai. Ex. 19, 16f. The Law of God works wrath, Rom. 4, 15; it kills, 2 Cor. 3, 6; it gives man no peace; it creates fear and terror in his heart. "Elijah had truly been zealous of the name of the Lord, at the sacrifice of self; but this manifestation should mean—and that is an important teaching for all servants of the Word—that zeal, Law, and punishment alone do not save and reform the sinner, but that the Lord is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and in truth and would convert and win the sinner by means of the Gospel. Of course, storm, earthquake, fire, wrath, punishment must precede the Gospel." (Stoeckhardt.)

In our day of general apostasy, multiplication of scoffers against



Christ and His Church, a liberal spirit in so-called Christian churches, worldliness in the Church, and the service of modern Baals and Ashtoreths in conjunction with Christ (unionism and lodgery), we must remember that zeal alone will not build the walls of Zion (Zech. 4, 6; Rom. 9, 16), and that the preaching of the Law, with its threats and punishment, alone will not bring the sinner to repentance and faith (Rom. 3, 28; Hymn 314, 2—4).

The preaching of the Law is necessary; for the sinner must be convicted of sin; he must feel God's wrath; he must recognize his guilt and unworthiness. But the Law alone cannot save, lift up, comfort, awaken spiritual life, bring to Christ. The Law has a great function; it prepares the way for the "still, small voice," the Gospel.

## 2.

Text, v. 11: "and after the fire a still, small voice." What a sublime picture of the Gospel, which moves quietly and unobtrusively, like the waters of Siloam and like the cool southwind (Song of Sol. 4, 16), quenching the fire of God's wrath, breathing life into the dead bones, lifting up the fallen, healing the wounded and terrified hearts. Thus the Lord works in the building of His kingdom here on earth.

In order to prove the effectiveness of this means, the Lord now told His prophet that his dejection had been unfounded. (Vv. 4. 10. 14.) V. 18. The power of the Gospel had been vindicated. The work of Elijah and his assistants had not been in vain. The results were there, though hidden. The seven thousand faithful in Israel were abundant testimony. The Word of God does not return to Him void. Is. 55, 11. God accompanies His Word with blessing, and the fruits are certain.

May we not draw instruction and encouragement for our work from this text? Also in these latter days the Gospel, "the still, small voice," which tells of the grace and love of God in Christ Jesus, "who gave Himself for us," must be proclaimed to bring comfort, health, peace, forgiveness, and strength to walk in newness of life. Its fruits may be hidden from view (Rom. 11, 4. 5; Zeph. 3, 12), yet it is still what it always has been — the power of God and the wisdom of God (Rom. 1, 16; 1 Cor. 1, 17f.).

Let us ministers preach the Word, the whole counsel of God, Law and Gospel; the former in all its power, the latter in all its sweetness and purity. Let our congregations thank God that they have ministers who are endeavoring to build the Church of God with the means God Himself has appointed. Thus, and thus only, can and will the Church of Jesus Christ be built in these latter days, and thus, under God, many will be saved "as brands from the burning."

W. G. P.

## Eine Amtserfahrung.

Es war in meinem vierten Amtsjahr, am Tag vor Weihnachten. Ich saß dabei und mühte mich, die wunderfelige Botschaft von dem neugeborenen Christkind in angemessener Form zu Papier zu bringen. Draußen tobte ein wüstes Wetter, und in meinem Innern sah es trübe aus. Das hatte verschiedene Ursachen. In der Gemeinde gab es Stürme, die mich ganz verzagt machten; im Haus war das Kreuz eingekehrt; kaum jemals war mir die eigene Unzulänglichkeit und Sündhaftigkeit so lebendig vor die Seele getreten wie an jenem Tage. Es schien mir unmöglich, eine Festpredigt zu schreiben. Es wollte mir nicht gelingen, den rechten Jubelton zu finden. Da lasen wir in unserer Abendandacht den 62. Psalm: „Meine Seele ist stille zu Gott, der mir hilfst. Denn er ist mein Hort, meine Hilfe, mein Schutz, daß mich kein Fall stürzen wird, wie groß er ist.“ Da wird nichts von der besonderen Weihnachtsoffenbarung der Gnade Gottes gesagt, und doch stand gerade sie mit einem Male so groß und herrlich mir vor Augen, daß es mir leicht von der Feder floß, zu rühmen und zu sagen von der Liebe Gottes, die sich in der Menschwerdung seines Sohnes geoffenbart hat, und von der Seligkeit, die wir in dem Kinde im Stall zu Bethlehem haben. Ich glaube, ich habe in meinem Leben nie mit größerer Freude gepredigt als an jenen Weihnachtstagen. Und heute sind mir die Weihnachtspredigten die liebsten.

Unser Gott führt seine Diener darum oft so dunkle Wege, damit er sie trösten könne in ihrer Trübsal und sie dann wieder aus dem Vollen schöpfen, wenn sie die trösten sollen, die da sind in allerlei Trübsal, 2 Kor. 1, 4. *Pectus disertum facit.* Je mehr man sich selbst in seiner ganzen Leere, Erbärmlichkeit und Elend erkannt hat, um so mehr ist das Herz zugerichtet, von der Gnade Gottes in Christo zu zeugen.

E. A. M.

Words well worth heeding by the overburdened pastor were uttered in a sermon on "The Christian Ministry" by F. D. Shannon, D. D., Central Church, Chicago. He said: "As in no other calling, the Christian ministry makes demands upon the active and passive sides of human nature. Perhaps the activity of the ministry has never been more marked than in our own generation. If one's life work is to be gaged by the number of things he does and is expected to do, then the twentieth-century minister in the United States of America would seem to be very near a solution of the problem of perpetual motion. It is certain that the charge of quietude or quiescence, if made against the average minister of our time, could not be sustained by the evidence in the case. Just here, it seems to me, is our glory or doom — our glory, if, by the grace of God, we keep our being centered upon the central things of our calling; our doom, if we fail to remember that trivialities may nibble away the measure and meaning of abounding realities."

B.



## Literatur.

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**Die Bibel** oder die ganze Heilige Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments nach der deutschen Übersetzung D. Martin Luthers, mit jedem Kapitel vorhergesetzten kurzen Summarien, sorgfältigst ausgesuchten und zahlreich beigelegten Real- und Verbal-Parallelstellen und vornehmlich bei allen schweren, von Spöttern gemißhandelten oder sonst zweifelhaft scheinenden Stellen mit möglichst kurzgefaßten Anmerkungen nach und aus dem Grundtexte, zur Anzeige des in demselben befindlichen Nachdruckes, zur Aufklärung des Zusammenhanges, Hebung scheinender Widersprüche und Abweisung schnöder Spottereien begleitet und erläutert. Ans Licht gestellt durch Ehrenfried Liebig, evangelischen Pastor zu Lomniz und Erdmannsdorf bei Hirschberg. Mit einer Vorrede und in den Anmerkungen vorhergegangener Prüfung, auch größtenteils eigenem Beitrage und selbst geführter Feder von D. Johann Friedrich Burg, königlich-preussischem Oberkonsistorialrat zu Breslau, der evangelischen Kirchen und Schulen Inspektor. Buch- und Kunstverlag Karl Hirsch A. G., Konstanz. 1,719 Seiten 7×10, in Halbfranz mit Rotschnitt und Goldtitel gebunden. Preis: \$6.00. Zu beziehen vom Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

Auf den Seminaren ist die Hirschberger Bibel den angehenden Pastoren und Lehrern so oft und so dringend empfohlen worden, auf Konferenzen und im Verkehr mit Amtsbrüdern hat man so manch lobendes Zeugnis von ihr gehört, daß es hier bloß eines Hinweises auf diese neue, vortreffliche Ausgabe, die die entchiedenste finanzielle Unterstützung unseres Verlagshauses erlangte, bedarf. Das Format ist äußerst handlich, der Einband gut und der Druck sehr zufriedenstellend. Man greife nach diesem nützlichen Hilfsmittel für die Studierstube und rede ihm das Wort herzlichster Empfehlung in seinen Gemeinden. B.

**Outlines for Catecheses and The Technique of Questioning.** By H. B. Fehner, M. A. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, \$1.25.

The double title of the book indicates its two parts. The introduction with its helpful hints must not be overlooked. The outlines are brief, but are ample for a fruitful treatment of the Catechism. Again, the rules set down for the mastering of the unmastered art of questioning are brief and need be but brief, for this task is difficult, not because the rules are numerous and cumbersome, but because their application requires constant care. We welcome this book as a valuable addition to the libraries of pastors and teachers. B.

**Daily Bread, or Home Devotions.** By F. E. Pasche. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, \$3.00.

On 422 pages, in 318 readings, this book of devotion by Rev. Pasche covers the entire Catechism topically, and as addenda morning and evening prayers and likewise several for grace before and after meals are offered. As long as our members follow the example of Luther, the *Katechismusschueler*, and continue to study and believe the essential and fundamental doctrines of Holy Writ as contained in the Catechism, we shall have those

most desirable members whom we may call *Katechismuschristen*. Under each heading, indicating the phase of the doctrine treated, the author sets a text of Scripture at the head as a basis for the following discussion. A suitable prayer and a stanza or stanzas from some hymn then follow. The book is a *Lehre und Wehre in nuce* and does not fail to suggest the necessary applications of the doctrines presented. May the Lord speed its way into the homes of our members and richly bless their meditation of its pages! Thus pure lives will grow out of pure doctrine. B.

**Lutherischer Kalender auf das Jahr 1927. — Lutheran Annual for 1927.**

Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price: Each 15 cts.

Beide Kalender sind von dem Statistiker der Synode, P. E. Eckhardt, mit großer Sorgfalt hergestellt; und wer die früheren kennt, der wird sehen, daß diese sich vor früheren noch auszeichnen. B.

**Catalog 1926—1927.** Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

This new catalog is new in more senses than one. It does not only, like those of former years, exhibit marks of excellent workmanship, not only has it been enlarged so that it now numbers almost 1,000 pages, but it has been more copiously illustrated, the topical arrangement has been made more serviceable by the addition of new titles in the index, and the music section has been entirely rearranged to facilitate the selection of compositions suitable for choirs of different ranges of ability. B.

**Sounding Joy.** A Collection of Christmas Carols and Chorals for Mixed Voices. Collected, revised, and adapted by *Walter Wismar*, organist and choirmaster of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Mo. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, 35 cts. a copy, postpaid; dozen, \$3.36, plus postage; 100, \$23.00, plus postage.

Our inability to bring this publication to the attention of our readers in time for the Christmas season we sincerely regret, but we hope that it will be ordered at once for future Christmas festivities, because Mr. Wismar's collection of 42 selections from the pens of the great and the greatest composers of sacred song, among them eleven harmonizations by Bach, deserve to be used by our choirs. Most of the selections are not difficult, and they may seem like trifles to choir leaders and choirs accustomed to rendering lengthy and elaborate anthems and cantatas. A proper interpretation of these gems, however, will convince even the most fastidious that nothing can surpass their majestic simplicity. B.

**The Titles of the Christians in the New Testament.** By *William Dallmann, D. D.* Northwestern Publishing House Print, Milwaukee, Wis. Price, \$1.75. Order from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

Replete with terse and forceful diction and with numerous Scripture references, this book, on 351 pages and under 41 headings, brings to the attention of the highly favored and honored Christian the lofty position he occupies before God by reminding him, for his own comfort, instruction, admonition, and warning, of the many titles conferred upon him by God Himself. We do not approve of a question like this one (p. 240), "Are you



as good as this heathen?" for the heathen, no matter how "good" he may be, is living in the damnable sin of self-righteousness, and the Christian, in spite of his many shortcomings, is cleansed from all sins by the blood of Christ. Models for Christians are the saints and not the sinners. Nor do we sanction historical references and quotations from profane writers in a *sermon*. The former are but relatively true, and the latter should not have the floor together with the prophets and the apostles. Dr. Dargan, *History of Preaching*, in criticizing Lutheran preachers of the so-called dead orthodoxy period and others for just these faults, sets up standards for preachers worthy to be noted. B.

**The Christian Fundamentals.** By *John Theodore Mueller*. 179 pages, 4×7. Ernst Kaufmann, publisher. Price, \$1.00. Order from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

This neatly bound volume contains "twenty-five weeks of topical Bible study, in daily lessons, for all who are interested in the Christian religion." The plan of the book is somewhat unusual, as it sets forth the fundamental doctrines of Christianity in the form of daily devotional material. Each day's lesson covers a page. Each lesson begins with an apt quotation, pertinent to the topic for the day, and closes with a suitable prayer. We believe that our pastors will find this book worth recommending to their members. Its chief aim is indoctrination, and every earnest pastor will welcome material that will help him extend the spiritual knowledge of his people. The price of the book is reasonable. W. G. P.

**Day by Day with Jesus.** A Christian Calendar. Edited by *W. H. T. Dau*. Ernst Kaufmann, 7—11 Spruce St., New York. Price, 60 cts. Order from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

With Scripture-lessons for morning and evening devotions and with the texts of the old pericopes for the respective Sundays and festivals indicated, with a text for each day briefly expounded and a suitable prayer added, this calendar will prove a godsend for those who use it day by day for family prayer or for their own personal blessing. B.

**Concordia Calendar for 1927.** Edited and compiled by *G. A. and E. A. Fleischer*, Lutheran Building, 105—109 N. Dearborn St., Chicago. Price, 50 cts. Order from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

For the small sum of 50 cents this calendar offers a large amount of wholesome reading-matter and of valuable information. B.

**Wilhelm von Kigelgen.** Jugenderinnerungen eines alten Mannes. Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft, Berlin S W 61, Teltower Straße 29.

Erzählertalent kennzeichnet dieses interessante Werk. Der Verfasser war nicht bloß ein Künstler mit dem Pinsel und dem Stift, sondern auch ein Künstler im Gebrauch des geschriebenen Wortes. Pastoren werden in ihren Erholungsstunden dieses fesselnde Buch gerne lesen. Sonst empfehlen wir es nur gereifteren Christen, da wir nicht jeder Ausführung beipflichten können. B.



## MISSION SECTION.

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### Survey of Our Work in China during 1925-26.

Station and personal reports are submitted by all missionaries at the annual General Conference. These reports afford insight into the work of the preceding conference year and set forth such progress as can be shown. Naturally, much that would be intensely interesting cannot be touched upon. We do not read of soul-stirring conversations carried on with prospective converts and with backsliders. We receive no confession of spiritual trials and afflictions encountered and overcome by reason of heathen surroundings and the often very depressing social isolation of our Christians. We do not hear of a constant wrestling with God in the privacy of the study and on missionary journeys for guidance and protection and blessings. The reports often seem to be dry reading. But to one who is able to visualize the brethren laboring in "the Father's business" at their far-away stations the reports reveal battles fought and victories won for the Lord and for the extension of His kingdom. Or, to employ another figure, the reports show the slow, but always successful effort of our brethren to invade the kingdom of Satan and to rescue souls from the power of darkness in order that they may enjoy the eternal freedom of the children of God.

In the following lines I shall cull as much from the annual reports as may serve to give us a bird's-eye view of the work of our brethren in China during 1925-26, August to August.

#### Hankow.

Hankow, lying 600 miles inland from Shanghai, is our oldest station. With two adjoining cities it has a total population of possibly a million and a half. This city is without question one of the most strategic missionary centers in China. The importance of Hankow for missionary endeavor cannot easily be overestimated.

The beginnings of our work go back to 1913. During the past year the missionary *personnel* consisted of Missionaries E. L. Arndt, E. Riedel, M. Zschiegner, C. F. Schmidt, J. Fischer, Miss O. Gruen, and, part of the year, Miss M. Oelschlaeger.

Rev. Zschiegner had charge of the Hsi Tsi Kai Chapel, its Christian day-school, and the outstation at Liu Chia Teng; also the Wha Chin Kai Chapel and the Tie Lo Wei Christian day-school. In addition, the teaching of religion in the Girls' Boarding-school was entrusted to him.

Rev. Schmidt was in charge of the Lao Kuan Miao and the San Hsin Kai chapels with their Christian day-schools, and the outstation at Yin Wu Chow and its Christian day-school. In addition he taught five periods of English in the High (Middle) School.

Rev. Riedel was in charge of the San Yuan Li Chapel and Christian day-school and of the Christians at Liu Chia Miao. But in addition, and chiefly, he was instructor in our Hankow Concordia Seminary.

Rev. Arndt was also allocated to the Hankow Concordia Seminary.

Rev. Fischer had charge of the High (Middle) School, being also General Treasurer of the Mission.

Miss Gruen was superintendent of the Girls' Boarding-school, being succeeded by Miss M. Oelschlaeger when she went on furlough in April, 1926.

The night-school classes for our schoolteachers were conducted by missionaries Arndt and Riedel. Among other important subjects the singing of the liturgy and of our Christian hymns was practised.

All of the regular Sunday and mid-week divine services were held almost without interruption. For the children's Christmas service a special program was prepared by Evangelist Pih, which was much like the program of former years. Two thousand copies were printed, and a copy was put into the hands of every one who attended the services in the various chapels.

The threatened antichristian demonstrations at Christmas did not turn out to be anything serious. Delegations of inimical heathen students visited several of our chapels, but raised no disturbances.

A joint Reformation-festival was held on October 31, in which all our Hankow chapels and the two outstations took part. At this service the cemetery committee, elected by our Chinese Christians, reported that it had succeeded in acquiring a small plot of ground in the neighboring city of Hanyang for burial purposes, at the price of \$200 (Mex.). All expenses were defrayed by our Christians. Already seven members of our Church have found their last resting-place here, awaiting the call of the Lord for the resurrection of their bodies.

A school outing was held on May 29, attended by some 400 pupils. The two outstations, because of distance, were not represented. Naturally parents and friends of the pupils swelled the number appreciably. It was a delightful affair.

Seventeen meetings were held by the Hankow Conference during the past year. Brother Fischer was secretary. The first hour of each meeting was, as a rule, devoted to doctrinal discussions. Much time was spent in considering the pressing land deals for the seminary, for residences, and chapels.

Miss O. Gruen left for the United States on April 23, having been given a furlough of six months. This was six months earlier than the usual furlough date, but was done under the sanction of the Home Board and at the request of Miss Gruen, who volunteered to sacrifice



one half year of her regular furlough period. Miss Gruen's work was taken over by Miss M. Oelschlaeger, who was called down from Shihnan.

On April 23, 1926, the brethren Zschiegner and Fischer reported that the land purchased from Mr. Dupree for the seminary and for other purposes was now the property of the Mission. The deeds, duly stamped, are in our hands, and the boundary stones bear our name.

### **Middle School (High School), 1925-26.**

The Middle School during the past year followed the calendar set by the General Conference last summer. School opened on September 7, 1925. Though students and teachers had returned, trouble was encountered at the very outset because two of the teachers had to be dropped from the staff following an investigation into an unseemly party held during the summer in which they had taken part. Efforts were made to secure a teacher from up the river, and Mr. Chang Kan Ch'eng was released to us by the brethren at Shihnan. He arrived in Hankow on October 3. Now the full school schedule could be observed. Rev. Riedel taught religion, Rev. Schmidt English in the lowest class and Rev. Fischer in the upper classes. School sessions were held five and a half days a week. The government plan was followed as much as possible. The enrolment was: first year, 15; second year, 13; third year, 5; total, 33, most of whom are supported by the Mission; 16 are on the stipend list, being supported by individuals and societies in the United States.

Devotions were held in the chapel every morning and were attended also by the primary pupils. A hymn was sung, one of the teachers read a Scripture-lesson, the pupils recited a chief part of our Lutheran Catechism, and the service was closed with the Lord's Prayer. The evening devotions were attended by all boarding-school pupils and were held in one of the classrooms. Usually they were conducted by one of the missionaries. When he was absent, one of the students of the highest class substituted. Four examinations were held during the year besides those conducted in September.

A literary club was organized in the second semester, with the aim in view of developing and improving the art of pupils' speaking. The speeches frequently were of a political nature, and naturally the sentiments expressed were not always correct. One of the teachers was always present in these meetings and made the necessary corrections. Fortunately we have had no strikes at San Yuan Li during the past year, although the students in the government schools were always busy with their propaganda.

Despite the poor quarters we were compelled to use, the ill-ventilated and poorly lighted rooms, the vermin, which simply could not be exterminated, and the mosquitoes, the health of the students was fairly good during the year.

Closing exercises were held at the San Yuan Li Chapel on the 26th of June.

Twenty-four of the students were baptized by one of our missionaries; seven received their entire education in our schools; fifteen have been with us since their upper primary years. Four of the students are married, and thirteen are engaged to be married. Eighteen of the students have heathen parents.

### Concordia Seminary.

The final theological instructions were given from September to the Chinese New Year. Nine students were enrolled, and there was one visitor. With the help of God the various studies: Dogmatics, Church History, Symbolics, Exegesis, and others, were either reviewed or completed. Although the term of instruction had come to an end and final examinations were being held, not all students completed their studies and their examinations. This is partly due to the illness of two men and partly to other causes. In order to give all students an opportunity to finish their studies, additional lectures and examinations were held after Chinese New Year's.

### Girls' School.

The Girls' School this year was divided into three departments: 1. The Women's Class, 2. the Middle School, 3. the Upper Primary School. The enrolment in the Women's Class was eleven; six entered in September, one in January, two in February, one in March, one in April. The women received instruction in the following subjects: Bible, Catechism, Reading, Arithmetic, Singing, Writing. These subjects were taught by Mr. Sen and the missionary in charge. Several of the women dropped out in the course of the year, so that there were only eight left when school closed.

In February eight girls were graduated from the upper primary into the Middle School. An additional girl entered in March. Only six of these took the examinations just before school closed, June 26. The parents of three of the pupils are baptized, one has a baptized father, one has a baptized mother, and the parents of four of the girls are not baptized. Five of the girls are not engaged. Four of the girls are being supported, three are partly supported, and two are supposed to be self-supporting, but only one of them has paid up. The subjects taught are: Religion, English, Singing, Geography, Drawing, Writing, Hygiene, Arithmetic, History, Composition, Music.

Seven girls were enrolled in the Upper Primary, but only five took the examinations in June. Five of them entered in September, one in October, and one in March. Two are not baptized, one has baptized parents, one has a baptized mother, one has two baptized brothers, but her parents are not baptized. None of the girls are

engaged. Two are supported by us, two are being partly supported, and three are self-supporting, though only one of these has paid her way in full. The following subjects were taught: Religion, English, Geography, Drawing, Writing, Hygiene, History, Arithmetic, Composition, and Music (some).

The school is located outside of the city. As far as health is concerned, the location is quite favorable. But one very objectionable feature is the proximity of a government boys' school. A number of the boys entered the school-grounds almost daily in spite of the bamboo fence around our grounds. At one time they even entered the dining-room while the girls were eating their evening meal. A letter of complaint to the neighboring principal brought the request to send a servant over to the school as soon as the students annoyed us again. We hope that there may be less trouble next year. If we could have our own quarters and were not compelled to rent, all this friction could be avoided.

The teachers and girls attended divine services at the Hwa Ching Kai Chapel on Sunday morning. The girls were permitted to go home once a month, leaving on Saturday afternoon and returning either Sunday afternoon or Monday morning. Some of the women went home every week.

The total number of baptized souls in our mission in Hankow numbers 426. Since November, 1925, 100 adults and 29 children were baptized. We have 7 chapels, 286 communicants, and 170 voting members. 26 services were held a week, with a total average attendance of 288. There are 91 catechumens. Our schools are attended by 625 pupils. These figures could easily be doubled and trebled if we only had qualified Christian teachers.

### Shasi.

The populous city of Shasi is situated about 275 miles west of Hankow, up the Yangtze River. We have been doing mission-work there since 1923. The missionary in charge during 1925-26 was Rev. A. C. Scholz. Among other things he says in his station report:— "Upon arriving at Shasi after the General Conference in Kuling last year, services were again held regularly beginning with September 9. From September to Christmas four meetings a week were held: two catechumen meetings, one Sunday service, one Bible class. In Bible class, Genesis was read. During these four months two mid-week meetings were held for missionary purposes; it was impossible to do more in this line. The attendance during this period was far from satisfactory. At the Sunday services the average attendance was only 8 adults and 5 children. From Christmas to July, however, the average attendance was better, namely, 13 adults.



"On Christmas Eve a special service was arranged, consisting of singing and recitations by some of the children who had been gathered, and a sermon. Special invitations had been sent to all those who at one time or other attended services and with whom we were acquainted. The attendance at this service was very gratifying, 52 adults and 22 children being present. On Christmas morning a regular festival service was held, attended by 16 adults. In the evening, at a special service, I experienced a joy never before felt; for I was permitted to baptize 11 souls, six adults and five children. My sermon was based on Rom. 1, 16. At Chinese New Year's Eve and New Year's Day we also met in divine worship. The Christians were told that the only proper way to close the year was to do it with the Word of God and with prayer. At first some thought the afternoon more convenient, but when services were finally announced for the evening, 15 adults were present. The sermon was based on Ex. 33, 14, 15, and I believe it can truthfully be said that it made a more lasting impression than would have been the case had the foreign calendar been followed. The same applies to the New Year's service. This was held on the first day of the Chinese first moon and was attended by 13 adults, eight Christians and five catechumens.

"At Easter a class for women was organized, which met once a week; average attendance, 9. New Testament Bible subjects were treated.

"Holy Communion was celebrated three times, all Christians partaking. Offerings for the work of the Lord are received at all Sunday services.

"Three weeks after the Chinese New Year a Christian day-school was opened with an enrolment of 37 pupils, all in the primary department. At present 35 are still with us, 25 boys and 10 girls. Tuition was \$1 in Mexican money (gold, 50 cents) per term, and all was collected. The religious instruction is given by Mr. Hsu Yu Ch'ing. Three periods a week are devoted to the Catechism and three to Bible History. Twice a week choral-singing is taught by the missionary. The secular branches are in charge of one of our Christians, Mr. Cheng Ching-Wen. Regular examinations are being conducted at the end of each month, and report cards are sent to the parents of the pupils. The examination in religion is conducted by the missionary, while the examination in the secular branches is held by two of our Christians. In this way, we trust, impartial results are obtained. To date the school has operated quite satisfactorily.

"According to the local magistrate, Shasi has a population of over 200,000. When one remembers that Shasi has less than 300 Christians of all denominations, it readily becomes evident that we have a large field in this city. The city is growing rapidly. We ought to have more missionaries.

"Our work is greatly hindered by the poor rented building we have; nothing better was available. As it sits immediately on the street and is a frame structure, every commotion on the street is plainly audible in the chapel, which makes it very difficult both to deliver and to hear the divine message. The condition of the building is such that the better class of Shasians do not care to enter it.

"We are glad to report that the missionary and his family, generally speaking, enjoyed good health during the whole year.

"The mission at Shasi has 18 baptized souls, eight adults and ten children. The number of catechumens is 7."

### Ichang.

About 85 miles west of Shasi, also on the Yangtze River, is the important city of Ichang. Like Shasi it is a treaty port and is said to have a population of about 100,000. Our mission at Ichang was opened in 1921. During the past year the missionary in charge was the Rev. H. W. Theiss. The regular schedule for divine services on Sundays, festivals, and week-days was observed. Two services a week were held with the male catechumens, on Tuesday and Friday evenings. This class, consisting of 8 men, was baptized on Sunday after Christmas, as were also 5 children. On Wednesday evenings a Bible class was conducted for baptized members as well as for the catechumens. Monday afternoon was reserved for a meeting with the women. These services were well attended, averaging some 18 women at each meeting. After Chinese New Year's an extra meeting with the women was conducted on Thursday afternoon. Two more children were baptized in the course of the year.

The Christian day-school has been one of the most discouraging phases of the work at Ichang. When the school was first opened, about a year and a half ago, it was put in charge of one of our native Christians. Our hopes ran high, but after a few months the teacher showed a noticeable lack of interest in his work, and the attendance began to decrease. While the teacher was familiar with his subjects, he lacked ability to impart his knowledge to others and, in addition, was a very poor disciplinarian. A new teacher was engaged last February, who was a catechumen from Shasi. With his arrival, interest revived, and not very long after that every seat in the schoolroom was occupied. But neither did this last long. The teacher is extremely near-sighted, which proves to be a distinct handicap in his work. As a result the school has again suffered considerably, and it seems another change will become necessary. The total enrolment is 20, nine boys and eleven girls.

In a general way the missionary and his family enjoyed good health.

A contract was let for leveling our land at \$360 (Mex.) and

erecting a wall around the compound for \$1,590 (Mex.), and a residence for the missionary was contracted for at a cost of \$8,200 (Mex.; \$4100 in gold). This amount includes the cost of the out-buildings for domestics. Building operations were begun in the late fall of 1926.

### Kweifu.

Some 200 miles west of Ichang, still on the Yangtze River, is Kweifu, a populous city in Szechwan Province. It is situated in that beautiful part of China generally designated as the Yangtze Gorges, though right here the mountains recede a little, and the river is not so turbulent. We have had a station at Kweifu since 1923. During the past year it was manned by Missionaries C. D. Nagel and A. H. Gebhardt.

Regular services were held every Sunday at noon, except for a few meetings, which were held in the forenoon, at ten o'clock. The services were held in the chapel on the rented mission compound. The present location of the chapel is not suited to effective missionary work as it is too much out of the way. Next year we hope to be able to rent or build a chapel in a more central district and on one of the busy streets of the city. This year we had the great pleasure of baptizing our first converts: on Pentecost Day 4 men and 4 children and on July 4 4 men and 8 children. In December, 1925, a foundling girl had been baptized, making a total of 21 baptisms. Communion services were held at Pentecost and on July 4. The Christians are still in need of much careful and thorough instruction and indoctrination.

So far the mission has not opened a Christian day-school. However, we hope to organize a school either in fall or at the next Chinese New Year. The congregation has elected two of its members to do the teaching. The enrolment, we trust, will be 50 pupils.

Medical work is a splendid means of gaining contact with the people. During the past year this has been limited to the free distribution of very common remedies whenever called for. In one or two cases we were called upon to treat people who had swallowed opium. A simple emetic was given, which proved successful.

In Kweifu, it is said, eight people out of every ten smoke opium. Our catechumens were also addicts. It was for their sakes that we tried a cure. So far as we know, the cure has been complete in most cases. A few, however, returned to their old habit. In all, 16 men and 4 women were treated. The lack of proper facilities made this difficult matter doubly difficult.

The total attendance at divine services was 1,759, an average of 42 persons a service. Over 150,000 tracts were distributed.

The Mission owns no property at Kweifu.



### Wanh sien.

Wanh sien is a very large and a very important city in Szechwan. It is about 120 miles west of Kweifu. We have been working there since 1923. Since its founding the station has been in charge of Missionary Geo. O. Lillegard. During the past year the work for the Christians and catechumens has continued in much the same way as before. Missionary services for the general public were conducted on Sunday mornings; Bible class for the Christians on Wednesday afternoons; classes for male catechumens on Tuesday and Friday afternoons; classes for female catechumens on Thursday afternoons; meetings of the congregation once a month. The attendance has not been as good as before, largely on account of the disturbed political conditions and the oppression of the military, causing both men and women to stay in their homes as much as possible.

On Pentecost Sunday three men and two women were added to our little congregation. One, Mr. Dzou, the father of the Chinese doctor who was baptized last year, is also a doctor of the old school; Mr. Li is a young man who has served as apprentice to a doctor; and Mr. Tan has been engaged in some small business. Mrs. Djou is the mother of our schoolteacher, who was baptized last year, and Mrs. Ih is the wife of another one of our Christians. A score of other catechumens have been attending classes this last year, but were not ready for baptism at this time. Several of them should be ready for admission to the church by next Christmas.

The dispensary opened by one of our Christians, Mr. Djou, last year has been discontinued, as Mr. Djou left for Ichang. Mr. Chiang, however, has continued with the work of distributing tracts and Bible portions. The need for a chapel down-town is as great as ever, and it is to be hoped that the necessary moneys for renting a suitable property can be budgeted for.

The Christians have been making satisfactory progress in their study of the Word. Those who formerly were illiterate can now read the Bible, with occasional assistance, and have learned by heart the Old Testament psalms or a considerable portion of them. At the Wednesday meetings the study of the Gospel harmony has been continued. Two Communion services have been conducted, with a total attendance of 23.

Four meetings of the voting members of the congregation have been held. The congregation has taken over the task of paying the running expenses of the chapel and the guest-room, has considered buying a plot of land for a Christian cemetery, and has been consulted with regard to the conduct of our school and the other mission-work. Two members had to be excommunicated — Mr. Giang, for opium-smoking and adultery; Mr. Wu, for opium-smoking and idolatry. In spite of the many admonitions which these members had

received and notwithstanding repeated opportunities to manifest true repentance, they clung to their old sins and vices in a way which showed that their profession of faith was false. We can but hope that the excommunication proceedings against them, which, after being truly carried out by the congregation, were announced after the services on May 22, will have the effect of bringing them to a true knowledge of their sins and sincere repentance.

As one of our members, Mr. Djou, has moved to Ichang, our congregations have no more voting members, including the three just baptized, than before — 8. There are, however, 14 communicant members, eleven male and three female, and 9 unconfirmed children. Total membership, 23. To this number should be added the son of Mr. Chiang, who has just come from Hankow and therefore should be transferred to our congregation.

A Lower Primary School for boys and girls was opened after Chinese New Year's, with one teacher, Mr. Chow-Hwa-wen, in charge. The parents have all signed statements promising that their children would attend regularly and submit to school discipline. The teacher has done fair work, and the school has been conducted quite successfully. It was the intention to charge a fair tuition, but as our teacher had not the reputation of attracting children who were willing to pay, we had to forego tuition, with the understanding that any child that did not behave itself in school should be subject to pay tuition.

After Chinese New Year's we secured the services of Mr. Pen, an M. A. of the old school, as secretary to help make a final revision of the translations of Luther's Catechism and Schwan's Explanation. I consider him by far the best scholar that it has been my fortune to meet in China, and I believe that his work can in all essentials be accepted as correct and as good style. Much time has been devoted to translation work also this half year. After Pentecost Rev. Gebhard found time to work through the catechisms again. Upon the whole, two weeks were spent on this work.

No serious illness has visited our family this year, thanks to God's good providence. We left Wanh sien for Kuling on June 11, 1926, as my wife needed medical attention that month. On July 5 our third child, Laura Bernice, came to bless our home. In Kuling considerable time has been spent in additional study of the "Term Question" and in attending to necessary repairs on our Walther League houses.

Since the first of February political conditions in Szechwan have been more chaotic than ever. General Yang Sen returned to Wanh sien shortly after the Chinese New Year and made preparations toward trying to regain control of the province. This meant a great deal of moving to and fro on the part of the many brigades of soldiers with which Szechwan is afflicted and the assembling of

a large army in Wanhsien and vicinity. In May, however, most of these troops moved up the river and took Chungking. As General Yang's headquarters were very near our place, we were not in any way molested by the soldiers, although conditions in the city were not always peaceful.

Shortly after Easter the brethren Scholz and Schmidt, two of the members of the land-buying committee, came to Wanhsien to inspect the various pieces of property that had been offered for sale. This committee advised buying property on which there were no buildings and listed certain places in the order of their desirability. It was impossible, however, to conclude any deal for any of the pieces thus listed. Just before we left for Kuling, however, an opportunity was given us to buy a piece of property adjoining the places now rented for residential and school purposes. The owner had died, and his widow wished to return to her original home. The land covers an area of 230 fang, or one half acre; on it is a well-built two-story building. I believed it would be well worth while to buy this property at the price offered. The final price agreed on was \$3,300 Mex. (gold \$1,650). Inclusive of various expenditures connected with the deal the total will amount to approximately \$4,000 Mex. (gold \$2,000).

### Shihnan.

One hundred and ten miles directly south of Kweifu, in the western part of Hupeh Province, lies Shihnan. In order to reach Shihnan either from Ichang, Kweifu, or Wanhsien, several high ranges of mountains must be crossed. The cross-mountain trip is trying, especially when it is made in company of women and children. However, when Shihnan has once been reached, all trials of travel are promptly forgotten. A more beautiful section of China cannot easily be found. Our work at Shihnan was begun in 1921. We now have a flourishing Christian day-school there, a dispensary, an orphanage, and a very promising Christian congregation. The signal blessing of the Lord has rested upon the labors of the brethren. During the past year the station was manned by Missionaries H. Klein and A. H. Ziegler and the Misses F. and M. Oelschlaeger and Miss M. Baden.

All scheduled public services in the city were held as regularly as possible. Missionary H. C. Klein was in charge. He was assisted by Missionary Ziegler, to whom the work in the country had been delegated. The Bible study class was held once a week; the First Epistle to the Corinthians was studied. Catechism classes were continued until May 21, when the members of these classes were baptized. From five hundred to a thousand tracts were distributed a week. Seven baptismal services were held, in which a total of 33 persons, twenty-four adults and nine children, was brought to Christ.



Two of the children are sons of a Baptist, who is doing military service here. He attended our meetings regularly and also the catechetical classes, and having become convinced that his Church took a wrong stand with respect to the Sacraments and other doctrines of Scripture, he came to us and requested that his sons be baptized and enrolled in our Christian day-school. He also wrote to his former pastor and informed him of the step he was taking and why he was taking it.

Religious work at the dispensary, which was conducted by the Misses Oelschlaeger and Baden, was in the hands of Mr. Niu Yueh T'in.

Two deaths occurred among our Christians. One hundred and fifty-four persons, exclusive of the missionaries, partook of Holy Communion in four services.

Our Christian day-school could continue to be conducted as formerly. A few changes were made in the teaching staff. The enrolment was 118.

The dispensary was also continued. The nurses' assistant had to be dismissed because of negligence and disobedience. The dispensary has been transferred to the rented Hu property. The number of patients treated during the recent period was 1,634.

The orphanage, too, was moved to the Hu quarters. It is under the direct supervision of Miss M. Oelschlaeger. The farm across the river has been mustered into the service of the orphanage. Four of our older orphans help Mr. Li Shu t'ao, who is our gardener. Mr. Niu Siwei and wife, members of our Christian congregation, are in charge of the orphanage. We now have 29 boys and 5 girls in the institution. Two of the boys will be sent to high school at Hankow in fall. We also have two baby girls, who must be specially provided for.

During the past year Missionary Ziegler made five missionary tours into the country, four of which lasted about a week each, while one took nineteen days. We have had no rented quarters in the outlying districts. Meetings were held in private homes, which, as a rule, are altogether unsuited to our purpose. The missionary was able to distribute from 2,000 to 3,000 tracts and to sell between 100 and 200 portions of Scriptures on each trip. He made it a point to be at the villages as much as possible on market days, when farmers from the neighboring districts come in with their products. This afforded an opportunity to get tracts to people who ordinarily could not be reached and to explain the tracts and Scriptures briefly. A colporteur always accompanied the missionary. About a dozen larger and smaller villages were visited, and the seed of the Word was sown. As these trips must be made afoot or by chair across very mountainous country, they are severely trying on the missionary, the most distant point reached being some thirty miles from Shihnan. Brother

Ziegler is hopeful that a few of these outstations are now ripe for more intensive work.

In large sections of Western Hupeh, and of China generally, absolutely no mission-work of whatever character is being done, while the doors are wide open for the Gospel-message.

Lord, send forth laborers into the harvest and protect and bless those whom Thou hast sent!

FREDERICK BRAND.

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## A Letter.

(Written by the undersigned in China.)

DEAR BROTHER:—

Many of our American friends imagine China to be an uncivilized country, where people run nearly naked and absolutely no comforts of life may be found. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The civilization of China goes back far beyond the birth of our Savior. More than five hundred years B. C., when all Western Europe still lay in the deepest literary darkness, the art of reading and writing was already long known in China. No one knows when it was first introduced. Until very recently scholars were regarded as being of much higher social rank than militarists.

Many cities of China have a population far exceeding 500,000, and a few have more than one million inhabitants. Quite a number of them are walled.

In the shops of China one can buy almost everything to be found in similar stores of St. Louis or Chicago, and what you cannot buy merchants will import for you. For many commodities no more is paid than in the United States, and some are really cheaper.

However, I did not intend to speak about stores to-day, but about an American and European institution that finds its exact counterpart out here, namely, the political press.

Such cities as Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai, and Hankow have daily and Sunday newspapers printed in English. In a general way these very much resemble our own home publications. Many of the features so well known to an American are copied. Advertising, though not conducted on so large a scale as in the States, fills much of the newspaper space and frequently is just as loud and as compelling as at home.

I have before me two English-language dailies of fourteen pages each. Here you can find editorials on Chinese, British, and American conditions, well written and in good temper. Full reports on European, American, and especially Chinese events are given. Right now the great battle fought at Nankow Pass, near Peking, is being featured. The battle appears to be of outstanding importance for the future of China since it means that Russian influence in this country is being broken.

In the papers before me more than one page is devoted to sports. Here you can also read about the dreadful drought in Manchuria, about the ravages of the Yangtze, which is again full to overflowing and is breaking through levees and devastating thousands upon thousands of acres of rice-lands. It is reported that hundreds of villages have been completely wiped out of existence by the wild waters, and thousands of the natives are said to have lost their lives.

Rather complete information is offered on the anti-Catholic crusade in Mexico. Japan looms up with the information that in Tokyo, the capital of that country, seven children are born every hour of the day, which means that the growth of that city by births alone was 62,498 in one year.

From Williamstown, Mass., we receive information on the Disarmament Conference. France tells us about Clemenceau's letter to President Coolidge.

Constantinople, at another place, is said to treat foreign chambers of commerce very "Turkishly."

In short, we are taken through the West and the East and are regaled with the most important facts and with some fancies.

Almost everything needed in house, workshop, office, and fields is offered. One very large department store advertises itself as the coolest place in town and invites its patrons with marked-down bargains. Cameras and films of American and German make are to be had. A close observer will notice that very many articles of German manufacture are again in the stores. A bewildering multitude of American, British, and French toilet articles are in the market. Users of tobacco will find a select and satisfying variety of that luxury. People who are either in a hurry or lazy can buy autos of American and European manufacture. And if the papers reveal one thing clearer than another, it is this, that the Eighteenth Amendment is not in force in China. Pastry of all kinds, fruit, imported and domestic, vegetables, baked goods, butter and milk, canned goods of well-known brands from the States, in short, almost everything carried by a prominent Chicago mail-order house is offered. Even a delicacy, called Swiss Kraeuterkaese, in the same green cones as we are wont to see them in our country, may be had at six for a dollar. And as the dollar in question is a Chinese dollar, the cheese will cost you in American currency only fifty cents, which is ten cents cheaper than in the United States.

Shortly before leaving for the Orient I bought a much-exploited model of portable typewriter. Over here I might have had it at the very same price, and by buying it here, I would have saved the four dollars I had to pay at Shanghai to the customs officers.

European and American steamship lines advertise extensively. When our missionaries are getting ready to go home on furlough, no



part of the newspapers appears to be so interesting as the steamship columns. Nor will I deny that I, too, have fixed a tentative date in my mind for my return journey. I found the date in the newspapers.

Will you bear with me another moment while I tell you about the American movies and the American films? All large cities in China have movie theaters in which American films are shown. Hankow has several houses of this kind. The newspapers make it painfully evident that many very low-grade pictures are exhibited. The Chinese youth are being debased by these shows. They do not learn to admire what is beautiful about our Western culture, but what is seamy in our public and private life. And more often than not the pictures are an exaggerated and untrue depiction of Western and of society events.

One additional feature of our American dailies I must mention before I close, and that is the comic section,—yes, I mean the American comic section. In a widely read Shanghai paper I could learn how father is being brought up, just how dumb Dora is, what happens in Gasoline Alley, and even Mutt and Jeff manage to get along together, not to mention some of the other side-splitting humor of certain of Chicago's greatest newspapers.

Now, if anybody dares to say that China is in deepest darkness and that the West is not doing its very best to bring the light of its towering intellect over here, I shall not undertake to convince him that he is mistaken, except to point, as a final clincher, to the inevitable pink sheet. I have a Shanghai pink sheet before me.

I might continue to enlarge on the merits of the English newspapers in China, but that might weary you. Allow me to conclude by assuring you that the English-language political press in China is just about on as high and as low a level as the American. All good and all bad features are to be found.

China has an ancient culture, which in many respects is admirable. The impact of our Western culture is forcibly bringing about a great change in Chinese daily life. I am not in a position to say that in many respect the ancient Chinese culture is not far superior to our own Western civilization.

Kuling, China.

FREDERICK BRAND.

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## News and Notes from South India.

Travancore, the largest and, very likely, the most important of all the native states under British *raj* (sovereignty) in India, has perhaps always had the greatest proportion of literates in all India, due preeminently to its unusually large Christian population, said to total one-fourth of the state's population. The London Mission

Society and the Church Missionary Society have large churches everywhere in the state, and the number of Syrian (Thomas) Christians, if we include the Romo-Syrian sections, is even larger. The Catholics are very strong all along the Malabar coast. It is noteworthy that Travancore has now a Christian *dewan*, or prime minister. He is Mr. Watts, a member of the Roman Catholic church, and a white man, a native, however, of Travancore. When he took up the dewanship, the administration of the temples in the state, which had always been an integral function of the dewanship, was lopped off and a separate official—a Hindu, of course—was entrusted with the administration of the rich revenue temples.

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Some rabid and, no doubt, jobless correspondent some time ago wrote to a Madras daily resenting an allegedly humiliating custom which, he claimed, prevailed at the honored old Women's Christian College in Madras. The principal of the college and some of her assistants, all white women, of course, had the custom of summoning students to eat at their table in the mess-hall, a new group every week. The charge was made that these students were given inferior food, got no European utensils, etc. When they had finished their curry and rice, which an Indian eats with his fingers, they were compelled to remain seated with their soiled fingers until Madam Principal and her professors were through their interminable courses. Certainly this was the British superiority complex all over again; the intolerable attitude of the Westerner preaching its pride to a subject race! It was that, but only until an alumna of the college wrote the paper and insisted that the students and alumnae of the college had never recognized the humiliation as such. They wanted the custom retained at all costs, and they wanted their principal's good name spared against all such vitriolic attacks.

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There are Britishers and other whites in India whose whole carriage exudes superiority; but there are other Britishers and other white men and women whose services the new India may reject—to her damnation.

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Among the chronic diseases that almost every conference held in our India Missions strives to nurse and cure is the custom of marrying rather according to caste and family than according to mission-membership and religious belief. People in India understand that Abraham imported a wife for Isaac from far-away Mesopotamia (Gen. 24) because he wanted her *from his own caste*; they overlook the fact that Abraham wanted, above all, a *godly* woman for his son. There are notable exceptions, for instance, the young Trivandrum teacher who married a girl, also a teacher, from a decidedly lower



social stratum. But these exceptions are so notable because they are so *very* exceptional. The material standing of the two families concerned is always a vital factor in match-making; even more so the tradition of caste and family. And so we have to look on with keen sorrow to see our Lutherans, our catechists and teachers not excepted, marry into Roman Catholic, London Mission, or Salvation Army circles, while many of our Lutheran girls, among them some whom we have had in our schools for years, girls with good Biblical knowledge, become a prey of Rome or of some heterodox mission.

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It is noteworthy by what devious and dubious devices the Roman Catholic hierarchy in India finances its extended activities, without taxing the faithful in America and Europe too heavily. Rome is just as much addicted to the gaudy and extravagant in India as it is in the Occident. But these things cost money, and somebody has to pay. The average Indian Christian is not a wealthy man, and his liberality is nothing extraordinary either. But the priests manage things admirably; they get the rupees out of the native's *veshti* (loin cloth) in surprising numbers. But how? Here is a list of fees that holds good at Vadakangulam, and the sums which accrue from these fees help very much to defray the parish expenses. The architecturally handsome Vadakangulam church has two bells, a larger one and a smaller one. These are rung on occasions of baptisms, marriages, and funerals at so much per ring. The smaller bell costs 8 cents; the larger one, 16 cents; if you want them both rung in honor of your wedding, the cost is 24 cents.

The fixed fee for the performance of a marriage is a rupee; if you want the priest to dress up in his Sunday best, these vestments will double the price. A low Mass is within the reach of all, at Rs. 1½. High Mass is pretty stiff for the average Indian, to wit, Rs. 7½ (\$2.50). The pontifical Mass, with the priest trio at the altar, is an altogether esoteric affair, costing over \$10 in U. S. money. But that does not include the candles; these are two rupees extra, and you may furnish more, if you choose, at your own expense.

Masses for the dead are graded by the same scale of charges, but funerals are a source of another revenue to the Church. The pealing of bells, if desired, costs 24 cents, announcement of the name of the dead for whom Mass is read another 8 cents, a spot on the burial ground also 8 cents. If the catechist accompanies the corpse to the cemetery, the charge is only 8 cents; but if the ordained priest goes along and officiates, two rupees are assessed.

Our own Christians are woefully weak in the virtue of Christian giving, but it cannot be said, at any rate, that their contributions are dependent on the amount of their pride, nor commercialized, as in the Roman Church.

E. H. MEINZEN.